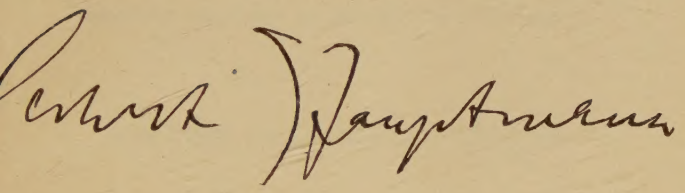
GERHART HAUPTMANN

DRAMATIC WORKS

THE DRAMATIC WORKS
OF



VOLUME ONE:

BEFORE DAWN
THE WEAVERS
THE BEAVER COAT
THE CONFLAGRATION

THE DRAMATIC WORKS
OF
GERHART HAUPTMANN

(AUTHORIZED EDITION)

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VOLUME ONE: SOCIAL DRAMAS

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PREFACE

The present edition of Hauptmann's works contains all of his plays with the exception of a few inconsiderable fragments and the historical drama *Florian Geyer*. The latter has been excluded by reason of its great length, its divergence from the characteristic moods of Hauptmann's art, and that failure of high success which the author himself has implicitly acknowledged. The arrangement of the volumes follows, with such modifications as the increase of material has made necessary, the method used by Hauptmann in the first and hitherto the only collected edition of his dramas. Five plays are presented here which that edition did not include, and hence the present collection gives the completest view now attainable of Hauptmann's activity as a dramatist.

The translation of the plays, seven of which are written entirely in dialect, offered a problem of unusual difficulty. The easiest solution, that namely, of rendering the speech of the Silesian peasants or the Berlin populace into some existing dialect of English, I was forced to reject at once. A very definite set of associative values would thus have been gained for the language of Hauptmann's characters, but of values radically different from those suggested in the original. I found it necessary, therefore, to invent a dialect near enough to the English of the common people to

convince the reader or spectator, yet not so near to the usage of any class or locality as to interpose between him and Hauptmann's characters an Irish or a Cockney, a Southern or a New England atmosphere. Into this dialect, with which the work of my collaborators has been made to conform, I have sought to render as justly and as exactly as possible the intensely idiomatic speech that Hauptmann employs. In doing this I have had to take occasional liberties with my text, but I have tried to reduce these to a minimum, and always to make them serve a closer interpretation of the original shade of thought or turn of expression. The rendering of the plays written in normal literary prose or verse needs no such explanation nor the plea for a measure of critical indulgence which that explanation implies.

I owe hearty thanks to Dr. Hauptmann for the promptness and cordiality with which he has either rectified or confirmed my view of the development and meaning of his thought and art as stated in the Introduction, and to my wife for faithful assistance in the preparation of these volumes.

Ludwig Lewisohn.

Columbus, O.,
June, 1912.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

I

Gerhart Hauptmann, the most distinguished of modern German dramatists, was born in the Silesian village of Obersalzbrunn on November 15, 1862. By descent he springs immediately from the common people of his native province to whose life he has so often given the graveness of tragedy and the permanence of literature. His grandfather, Ehrenfried, felt in his own person the bitter fate of the Silesian weavers and only through energy and good fortune was enabled to change his trade to that of a waiter. By 1824 he was an independent inn-keeper and was followed in the same business by the poet's father, Robert Hauptmann. The latter, a man of solid and not uncultivated understanding, married Marie Strachler, daughter of one of the fervent Moravian households of Silesia, and had become, when his sons Carl and Gerhart were born, the proprietor of a well-known and prosperous hotel, *Zur Preussischen Krone.*

From the village-school of Obersalzbrunn, where he was but an idle pupil, Gerhart was sent in 1874 to the *Realschule* at Breslau. Here, in the company of his older brothers, Carl and Georg, the lad remained for nearly four years, having impressed his teachers most strongly, it

appears, by a lack of attention. For this reason, but also perhaps because his father, injured by competitors and by a change in local conditions, had lost his independence, Gerhart was withdrawn from school in 1878. He was next to become a farmer and, to this end, was placed in the pious family of an uncle. Gradually, however, artistic impulses began to disengage themselves — he had long modelled in a desultory way — and in October, 1880, at the advice of his maturer brother Carl, Haptmann proceeded to Breslau and was enrolled as a student in the Royal College of Art.

The value of this restless shifting in his early years is apparent. For the discontent that marked his unquiet youth made for a firm retention of impressions. Observation, in the saying of Balzac, springs from suffering, and Hauptmann saw the Silesian country-folk and the artists of Breslau with an almost morbid exactness of vision. Actual conflict sharpened his insight. Three weeks after entering the art-school he received a disciplinary warning and early in 1881 he was rusticated for eleven weeks. Nevertheless he remained in Breslau until April, 1882, when he joined his brother Carl and became a special student at the University of Jena. Here he heard lectures by Liebmann, Eucken and Haeckel. But the academic life did not hold him long. Scarcely a year passed and Hauptmann is found at Hamburg, the guest of his future parents-in-law and his brother's. Thence he set out on an Italian journey, travelling by way of Spain and the South of France to Genoa, and visiting Naples, Capri and Rome. Although his delight in these places was diminished by his keen social consciousness,

he returned to Italy the following year (1884) and, for a time, had a sculptor's studio in Rome. Overtaken here by typhoid fever, he was nursed back to health by his future wife, Marie Thienemann, and returned to Germany to gather strength at the Thienemann country house.

So far, sculpture had held him primarily; it was now that the poetic impulse asserted itself. Seeking a synthesis of these tendencies in a third art, Hauptmann determined, for a time, to adopt the calling of an actor. To this end he went to Berlin. Here, however, the interest in literature soon grew to dominate every other and, in 1885, the year of his marriage to Fräulein Thienemann, he published his first work: *Promethidenlos.*

The poem is romantic and amorphous and gives but the faintest promise of the masterly handling of verse to be found in *The Sunken Bell* and *Henry of Aue.* Its interest resides solely in its confirmation of the facts of Hauptmann's development. For the hero of *Promethidenlos* vacillates between poetry and sculpture, but is able to give himself freely to neither art because of his overwhelming sense of social injustice and human suffering. And this, in brief, was the state of Hauptmann's mind when, in the autumn of 1885, he settled with his young wife in the Berlin suburb of Erkner.

The years of his residence here are memorable and have already become the subject of study and investigation. And rightly so; for during this time there took place that impact of the many obscure tendencies of the age upon the most sensitive and gifted of German minds from which sprang the naturalistic movement. That move-

ment dominated literature for a few years. Then, in Hauptmann's own temper and in his own work, arose a vigorous idealistic reaction which, blending with the severe technique and incorruptible observation of naturalism, went far toward producing — for a second time — a new vision and a new art. The conditions amid which this development originated are essential to a full understanding of Hauptmann's work.

II

At the end of the Franco-Prussian war, united Germany looked forward to a literary movement commensurate with her new greatness. That movement did not appear. It was forgotten that men in the maturity of their years and powers could not suddenly change character and method and that the rise of a new generation was needed. So soon, however, as the first members of that generation became articulate, a bitter and almost merciless warfare arose in literature and in the drama. The brothers Heinrich and Julius Hart, vigorous in both critical and creative activity, asserted as early as 1882 that German literature was then, at its best, the faint imitation of an outworn classicism and the German drama a transference of the basest French models. It is easy to see to-day that their view was partisan and narrow. Neither Wilbrandt and Heyse, on the one hand, nor Lindau and L'Arronge, on the other, represented the whole literary activity of the empire. It is equally easy, however, to understand their impatience with a literature which, upon the whole, lacked any breath of greatness, and handled

the stuff of human life with so little freshness, incisiveness and truth.

What direction was the new literature to take? The decisive influence was, almost necessarily, that of the naturalistic writers of France. For the tendencies of these men coincided with Germany's growing interest in science and growing rejection of traditional religion and philosophy. Tolstoi, Ibsen and Strindberg each contributed his share to the movement. But all the young critics of the eighties fought the battles of Zola with him and repeated, sometimes word for word, the memorable creed of French naturalism formulated long before by the Goncourt brothers: "The modern — everything for the artist is there: in the sensation, the intuition of the contemporary, of this spectacle of life with which one rubs elbows!" Such, with whatever later developments, was the central doctrine of young Germany in the eighties; such the belief that gradually expressed itself in a number of definite organisations and publications.

The most noteworthy of these, prior to the founding of the *Freie Bühne,* were the magazine *Die Gesellschaft* (1885), edited by Michael Conrad, the most ardent of German Zolaists, and the society *Durch* (1886), in which the revolutionary spirits of Berlin united to promulgate the art canons of the future. "Literature and criticism," Conrad declared, must first of all be "liberated from the tyranny of the conventional young lady:" the programme of *Durch* announced that the poet must give creative embodiment to the life of the present, that he shall show us human beings of flesh and blood and depict their passions

with implacable fidelity; that the ideal of art was no longer the Antique, but the Modern. Nor was there wanting creative activity in the spirit of these views. Franzos and Kretzer, to name but a few, originated the modern realistic novel in Germany, and Liliencron brought back vigour and concreteness to the lyric.

Into the tense atmosphere of this literary battle Hauptmann was cast when he took up his residence at Erkner. The house he occupied was the last in the village, half buried in woods and with far prospects over the heaths and deep green, melancholy waters of Brandenburg. Hither came, among many others, the brothers Hart, the novelist Kretzer, Wilhelm Bölsche, the inexhaustible prophet of the new science and the new art, and finally, the founder of German naturalism as distinguished from that of France — Arno Holz. The efforts of all these men harmonised with Hauptmann's mood. Naturalistic art goes for its subject matter to the forgotten and disinherited of the earth, and it was with these that Hauptmann was primarily concerned. He read Darwin and Karl Marx, Saint-Simon and Zola. He was absorbed not by any problem of art but by the being and fate of humanity itself.

Under these influences and governed by such thoughts, he began his career as a man of letters anew. But his progress was slow and uncertain. In 1887 he published in Conrad's *Gesellschaft* an episodic story, *Bahnwärter Thiel,* weak in narrative technique and obviously inspired by Zola. Even the sudden expansion of human characters into demonic symbols of their ruling passions is imitated. The medium clearly irked him and

gave him no opportunity for personal expression. For many months his activity was tentative and fruitless. Early in 1889, however, Arno Holz, known until then only by a volume of brave and resonant verse, visited Erkner and brought with him his theory of "consistent naturalism" as illustrated by *Papa Hamlet* and *Die Familie Selicke,* sketches and a drama in manuscript. This meeting gave Hauptmann one of those illuminating technical hints which every creative artist knows. It brought him an immediate method such as neither Tolstoi nor Dostoievsky had been able to bring, and decided him for naturalism and for the drama. He had found himself at last. During a visit to his parents he gave himself up to intense labour and returned to Berlin in the spring of 1889 with his first drama, *Before Dawn,* completed.

The play might have waited indefinitely for performance, had not Otto Brahm and Paul Schlenther, both critical thinkers of some significance, founded the free stage society (*Freie Bühne*) earlier in the same year. It was the aim of this society to give at least eight annual performances in the city of Berlin which should be wholly free from the influence of the censor and from the pressure of economic needs. The greater number of the first series of performances had already been prepared for by a selection of foreign plays — Tolstoi, Goncourt, Ibsen, Björnsen, Strindberg — when, at the last moment, a young German dramatist presented himself and succeeded in having his play accepted. Thus the society, long since dead, had the good fortune of fulfilling the function for which it was created:

it launched the naturalistic movement; it cradled the modern drama of Germany.

The first performance of *Before Dawn* (Oct. 20, 1889) was tumultuous. It recalled the famous *Hernani* battle of French romanticism. But the victory of Hauptmann was not long in doubt. With his third play he conquered the national stage of which he has since been, with whatever variations of immediate success, the undisputed master.

III

The "consistent naturalism" of Holz and his collaborator Johannes Schlaf is the technical foundation of Hauptmann's work. He has long transcended its narrow theory and the shallow positivism on which it was based. It discarded verse and he has written great verse; it banished the past from art and he has gone to legend and history for his subjects; it forbade the use of symbols and he has, at times, made an approach to his meaning unnecessarily difficult. But Hauptmann has never quite abandoned the practice of that form of art which resulted from the theories of Holz. From history and poetry he has always returned to the naturalistic drama. *Rose Bernd* follows *Henry of Aue,* and *Griselda* immediately preceded *The Rats.* Nor is this all. The methods of naturalism have followed him into the domains of poetry and of the past. His verse is scrupulously devoid of rhetoric; the psychology of his historic plays is sober and human. Hence it is clear that an analysis of the consistent naturalism of German literature is, with whatever modifications, an analysis of Hauptmann's work in

its totality. Like nearly all the greater dramatists he had his forerunners and his prophets: he proceeds from a school of art and thought which, even in transcending, he illustrates.

The consistent naturalists, then, aimed not to found a new art but, in any traditional sense, to abandon it. They desired to reduce the conventions of technique to a minimum and to eliminate the writer's personality even where Zola had admitted its necessary presence — in the choice of subject and in form. For style, the very religion of the French naturalistic masters, there was held to be no place, since there was to be, in this new literature, neither direct exposition, however impersonal, nor narrative. In other words, none of the means of representation were to be used by which art achieves the illusion of life; since art, in fact, was no longer to create the illusion of reality, but to *be* reality. The founders of the school would have admitted that the French had done much by the elimination of intrigue and a liberal choice of theme. They would still have seen — and rightly according to their premises — creative vision and not truth even in the oppressive pathology of *Germinie Lacerteux* and the morbid brutalities of *La Terre*. The opinion of Flaubert that any subject suffices, if the treatment be excellent, was modified into: there must be neither intentional choice of theme nor stylistic treatment. For style supposes rearrangement, personal vision, unjust selection of detail, and literature must be an exact rendition of the actual.

Stated so baldly the doctrine of consistent naturalism verges on the absurd. Eliminate selection of detail and personal vision, and art becomes not

only coextensive with life, but shares its confusion and its apparent purposelessness. It loses all interpretative power and ceases to be art. Practically, however, the doctrine led to a very definite form — the naturalistic drama. For, if all indirect treatment of life be discarded, nothing is left but the recording of speech and, if possible, of speech actually overheard. The juxtaposition of such blocks of scrupulously rendered conversation constitutes, in fact, the earliest experiments of Arno Holz. Under the creative energy of Hauptmann, however, the form at once grew into drama, but a drama which sought to rely as little as possible upon the traditional devices of dramaturgic technique. There was to be no implication of plot, no culmination of the resulting struggle in effective scenes, no superior articulateness on the part of the characters. A succession of simple scenes was to present a section of life without rearrangement or heightening. There could be no artistic beginning, for life comes shadowy from life; there could be no artistic ending, for the play of life ends only in eternity.

The development of the drama in such a direction had, of course, been foreshadowed. The plays of Ibsen's middle period tend to a simpler rendering of life, and the cold intellect of Strindberg had rejected the "symmetrical dialogue" of the French drama in order "to let the brains of men work unhindered." But Hauptmann carries the same methods extraordinarily far and achieves a poignant verisimilitude that rivals the pity and terror of the most memorable drama of the past.

These methods lead, naturally, to the exclusion

of several devices. Thus Hauptmann, like Ibsen and Shaw, avoids the division of acts into scenes. The coming and going of characters has the unobtrusiveness but seldom violated in life, and the inevitable artifices are held within rigid bounds. In some of his earlier dramas he also observed the unities of time and place, and throughout his work practices a close economy in these respects. It goes without saying that he rejects the monologue, the unnatural reading of letters, the *raisonneur* or commenting and providential character, the lightly motivised confession — all the devices, in brief, by which the conventional playwright blandly transports information across the footlights, or unravels the artificial knot which he has tied.

In dialogue, the medium of the drama, Hauptmann shows the highest originality and power. Beside the speech of his characters all other dramatic speech, that of Ibsen, of Tolstoi in *The Power of Darkness,* or of Pinero, seems conscious and unhuman. Nor is that power a mere control of dialect. Johannes Vockerat and Michael Kramer, Dr. Scholz and Professor Crampton speak with a human raciness and native truth not surpassed by the weavers or peasants of Silesia. Hauptmann has heard the inflections of the human voice, the faltering and fugitive eloquence of the living word not only with his ear but with his soul.

External devices necessarily contribute to this effect. Thus Hauptmann renders all dialect with phonetic accuracy and correct differentiation. In *Before Dawn,* Hoffmann, Loth, Dr. Schimmelpfennig and Helen speak normal High German;

all the other characters speak Silesian except the imported footman Edward, who uses the Berlin dialect. In *The Beaver Coat* the various gradations of that dialect are scrupulously set down, from the impudent vulgarity of Leontine and Adelaide to the occasional consonantal slips of Wehrhahn. The egregious Mrs. Wolff, in the same play, cannot deny her Silesian origin. Far finer shades of character are indicated by the amiable elisions of Mrs. Vockerat Senior in *Lonely Lives,* the recurrent crassness of Mrs. Scholz in *The Reconciliation,* and the solemn reiterations of Michael Kramer. Nor must it be thought that such characterisation has anything in common with the set phrases of Dickens. From the richness and variety of German colloquial speech, from the deep brooding of the German soul over the common things and the enduring emotions of life, Hauptmann has caught the authentic accents that change dramatic dialogue into the speech of man.

IV

In the structure of his drama Hauptmann met and solved an even more difficult problem than in the character of his dialogue. The whole tradition of structural technique rests upon a more or less arbitrary rearrangement of life. *Othello,* the noblest of tragedies, no less than the most trivial French farce, depends for the continuity of its mere action on an improbable artifice. Desdemona's handkerchief may almost be taken to symbolise that element in the drama which Hauptmann studiously denies himself. And he does so by reason of his more intimate contact with the

normal truth of things. In life, for instance, the conflict of will with will, the passionate crises of human existence are but rarely concentrated into a brief space of time or culminate in a highly salient situation. Long and wearing attrition, and crises that are seen to have been such only in the retrospect of calmer years are the rule. In so telling a bit of dramatic writing as the final scene in Augier's *Le gendre de M. Poirier* the material of life has been dissected into mere shreds and these have been rewoven into a pattern as little akin to reality as the flowers and birds of a Persian rug. Instead of such effective rearrangement Hauptmann contents himself with the austere simplicity of that succession of action which observation really affords. He shapes his material as little as possible. The intrusion of a new force into a given setting, as in *Lonely Lives,* is as violent an interference with the sober course of things as he admits. From his noblest successes, *The Weavers, Drayman Henschel, Michael Kramer,* the artifice of complication is wholly absent.

It follows that his fables are simple and devoid of plot, that comedy and tragedy must inhere in character and that conflict must grow from the clash of character with environment or of character with character in its totality. In other words: since the adventurous and unwonted are rigidly excluded, dramatic complication can but rarely, with Hauptmann, proceed from action. For the life of man is woven of "little, nameless, unremembered acts" which possess no significance except as they illustrate character and thus, link by link, forge that fate which is identical with character. The constant and bitter conflict in the

world does not arise from pointed and opposed notions of honour and duty held at some rare climacteric moment, but from the far more tragic grinding of a hostile environment upon man or of the imprisonment of alien souls in the cage of some social bondage.

These two motives, appearing sometimes singly, sometimes blended, are fundamental to Hauptmann's work. In *The Reconciliation* an unnatural marriage has brought discord and depravity upon earth; in *Lonely Lives* a seeker after truth is throttled by a murky world; in *The Weavers* the whole organization of society drives men to tragic despair; in *Colleague Crampton* a cold blooded woman all but destroys the gentle-hearted painter; in *The Beaver Coat* the motive is ironically inverted and a base shrewdness triumphs over the stupid social machine; in *Rose Bernd* traditional righteousness hounds a pure spirit out of life; and in *Gabriel Schilling's Flight,* his latest play, Hauptmann returns to a favourite motive: woman, strong through the narrowness and intensity of her elemental aims, destroying man, the thinker and dreamer, whose will, dissipated in a hundred ideal purposes, goes under in the unequal struggle.

The fable and structure of *Michael Kramer* illustrate Hauptmann's typical themes and methods well. The whole of the first act is exposition. It is not, however, the exposition of antecedent actions or events, but wholly of character. The conditions of the play are entirely static. Kramer's greatness of soul broods over the whole act. Mrs. Kramer, the narrow-minded, nagging wife, and Arnold, the homely, wretched boy with

a spark of genius, quail under it. Michaline, the brave, whole-hearted girl, stands among these, pitying and comprehending all. In the second act one of Arnold's sordid and piteous mistakes comes to light. An inn-keeper's daughter complains to Kramer of his son's grotesque and annoyingly expressed passion for her. Kramer takes his son to task and, in one of the noblest scenes in the modern drama, wrestles with the boy's soul. In the third act the inn is shown. Its rowdy, semi-educated habitués deride Arnold with coarse gibes. He cannot tear himself away. Madly sensitive and conscious of his final superiority over a world that crushes him by its merely brutal advantages, he is goaded to self-destruction. In the last act, in the presence of his dead son, Michael Kramer cries out after some reconciliation with the silent universe. The play is done and nothing has happened. The only action is Arnold's suicide and that action has no dramatic value. The significance of the play lies in the unequal marriage between Kramer and his wife, in Arnold's character — in the fact that such things *are,* and that in our outlook upon the whole of life we must reckon with them.

Hauptmann's simple management of a pregnant fable may be admirably observed, finally, by comparing *Lonely Lives* and *Rosmersholm.* Hauptmann was undoubtedly indebted to Ibsen for his problem and for the main elements of the story: a modern thinker is overcome by the orthodox and conservative world in which he lives. And that world conquers largely because he cannot be united to the woman who is his inspiration and his strength. In handling this fable two diffi-

cult questions were to be answered by the craftsman: by what means does the hostile environment crush the protagonist? Why cannot he take the saving hand that is held out to him? Ibsen practically shirks the answer to the first question. For it is not the bitter zealot Kroll, despite his newspaper war and his scandal-mongering, who breaks Rosmer's strength. It is fate, fate in the dark and ancient sense. "The dead cling to Rosmersholm"— that is the keynote of the play. The answer to the second question is interwoven with an attempt to rationalise the fatality that broods over Rosmersholm. The dead cling to it because a subtle and nameless wrong has been committed against them. And that sin has been committed by the woman who could save Rosmer. At the end of the second act Rebecca refuses to be his wife. The reason for that refusal, dimly prefigured, absorbs his thoughts, and through two acts of consummate dramaturgic suspense the sombre history is gradually unfolded. And no vague phrases concerning the ennobling of humanity can conceal the central fact: the play derives its power from a traditional plot and a conventional if sound motive — crime and its discovery, sin and its retribution.

In *Lonely Lives* the two questions apparently treated in *Rosmersholm* are answered not in the terms of effective dramaturgy, but of life itself. Johannes Vockerat lives in the midst of the world that must undo him — subtly irritated by all to which his heart clings. Out of that world he has grown and he cannot liberate himself from it. His good wife and his admirable parents are bound to the conventional in no base or fanatical

sense. He dare scarcely tell them that their preoccupations, that their very love, slay the ideal in his soul. And so the pitiless attrition goes on. There is no action: there is being. The struggle is rooted in the deep divisions of men's souls, not in unwonted crime or plotting. And Anna Mahr, the free woman of a freer world, parts from Johannes because she recognises their human unfitness to take up the burden of tragic sorrow which any union between them must create. The time for such things has not come, and may never come. Thus Johannes is left desolate, powerless to face the unendurable emptiness and decay that lie before him, destroyed by the conflicting loyalties to personal and ideal ends which are fundamental to the life of creative thought.

V

Drama, then, which relies so little upon external action, but finds action rather in "every inner conflict of passions, every consequence of diverging thoughts," must stress the obscurest expression of such passions and such thoughts. Since its fables, furthermore, are to arise from the immediate data of life, it must equally emphasise the significant factor of those common things amid which man passes his struggle. And so the naturalistic drama was forced to introduce elements of narrative and exposition usually held alien to the *genre*. Briefly, it has dealt largely and powerfully with atmosphere, environment and gesture; it has expanded and refined the stage-direction beyond all precedent and made of it an important element in dramatic art.

The playwrights of the middle of the last century who made an effort to lead the drama back to reality, knew nothing of this element. Augier does not even suspect its existence; in Robertson it is a matter of "properties" and "business." Any appearance of this kind Hauptmann avoids. The play is not to remind us of the stage, but of life. A difference in vision and method difficult to estimate divides Robertson's direction: "Sam. (astonished L. corner)" from Hauptmann's "Mrs. John rises mechanically and cuts a slice from a loaf of bread, as though under the influence of suggestion." Robertson indicates the conventionalised gesture of life; Hauptmann its moral and spiritual density.

The descriptive stage direction, effectively used by Ibsen, is further expanded by Hauptmann. But it remains impersonal and never becomes direct comment or even argument as in Shaw. It is used not only to suggest the scene but, above all, its atmosphere, its mood. Through it Hauptmann shows his keen sense of the interaction of man and his world and of the high moral expressiveness of common things. To define the mood more clearly he indicates the hour and the weather. The action of *Rose Bernd* opens on a bright Sunday morning in May, that of *Drayman Henschel* during a bleak February dawn. The desperate souls in *The Reconciliation* meet on a snow-swept Christmas Eve; the sun has just set over the lake in which Johannes Vockerat finds final peace. In these indications Hauptmann rarely aims at either irony or symbolism. He is guided by a sense for the probabilities of life which he expresses through such interactions between the moods of man and

nature as experience seems to offer. Only in *The Maidens of the Mount* has the suave autumnal weather a deeper meaning, for it was clearly Hauptmann's purpose in this play

> "To build a shadowy isle of bliss
> Midmost the beating of the steely sea."

Hauptmann has also become increasingly exacting in demanding that the actor simulate the personal appearance of his characters as they arose in his imagination. In his earlier plays the descriptions of men and women are at times brief; in *The Rats* even minor figures are visualised with remarkable completeness. Pastor Spitta, for instance, is thus introduced: "Sixty years old. A village parson, somewhat 'countrified.' One might equally well take him to be a surveyor or a landowner in a small way. He is of vigorous appearance — short-necked, well-nourished, with a squat, broad face like Luther's. He wears a slouch hat, spectacles, and carries a cane and a coat over his arm. His clumsy boots and the state of his other garments show that they have long been accustomed to wind and weather." Such directions obviously tax the mimetic art of the stage to the very verge of its power. Thus, by the precision of his directions both for the scenery and the persons of each play, and by unmistakable indications of gesture and expression at all decisive moments of dramatic action, Hauptmann has placed within narrow limits the activity of both stage manager and actor. He alone is the creator of his drama, and no alien factitiousness is allowed to obscure its final aim — the creation of living men.

VI

In the third act of Hauptmann's latest naturalistic play, *The Rats* (1911), the ex-stage manager Hassenreuter is drawn by his pupil, young Spitta, into an argument on the nature of tragedy. "Of the heights of humanity you know nothing," Hassenreuter hotly declares. "You asserted the other day that in certain circumstances a barber or a scrubwoman could as fitly be the subject of tragedy as Lady Macbeth or King Lear." And Spitta reaffirms his heresy in the sentence: "Before art as before the law all men are equal." From this doctrine Hauptmann has never departed, although his interpretation of it has not been fanatical. Throughout his work, however, there is a careful disregard of several classes of his countrymen: the nobility, the bureaucracy (with the notable exception of Wehrhahn in *The Beaver Coat*), the capitalists. He has devoted himself in his prose plays to the life of the common people, of the middle classes, and of creative thinkers.

The delineation of all these characters has two constant qualities: objectivity and justice. The author has not merged the sharp outlines of humanity into the background of his own idiosyncrasy. Ibsen's characters speak and act as though they had suddenly stepped from another world and were still haunted by a breath of their strange doom; the people of Shaw are often eloquent exponents of a theory of character and society which would never have entered their minds. Hauptmann's men and women are themselves. No trick of speech, no lurking similarity of thought unites them. The nearer any two of them tend to ap-

proach a recognisable type, the more magnificently is the individuality of each vindicated. The elderly middle-class woman, harassed by ignoble cares ignobly borne, driven by a lack of fortitude into querulousness, and into injustice by the selfishness of her affections, is illustrated both in Mrs. Scholz and Mrs. Kramer. But, in the former, bodily suffering and nervous terror have slackened the moral fibre, and this abnormality speaks in every word and gesture. Mrs. Kramer is simply average, with the tenacity and the corroding power of the average.

Another noteworthy group is that of the three Lutheran clergymen: Kolin in *Lonely Lives,* Kittelhaus in *The Weavers,* and Spitta in *The Rats.* Kolin has the utter sincerity which can afford to be trivial and not cease to be lovable; Kittelhaus is the conscious time-server whose opinions might be anything; Spitta struggles for his official convictions, half blinded by the allurements of a world which it is his duty to denounce. Each is wholly himself; no hint of critical irony defaces his character; and thus each is able, implicitly, to put his case with the power inherent in the genuinely and recognisably human. From the same class of temperaments — one that he does not love — Hauptmann has had the justice to draw two characters of basic importance in *Lonely Lives.* The elder Vockerats are excessively limited in their outlook upon life. It is, indeed, in its time and place, an impossible outlook. These two people have nothing to recommend them save their goodness, but it is a goodness so keenly felt, so radiantly human, that the conflict of the play is deepened and complicated by the question

whether the real tragedy be not the pain felt by these kindly hearts, rather than the destruction of their more arduous son.

All these may be said to be minor characters. Some of them are, in that they scarcely affect the fable involved. But in no other sense are there minor figures in Hauptmann's plays. A few lines suffice, and a human being stands squarely upon the living earth, with all his mortal perplexities in his words and voice. Such characters are the tutor Weinhold in *The Weavers,* the painter Lachmann in *Michael Kramer,* Dr. Boxer in *The Conflagration* and Dr. Schimmelpfennig in *Before Dawn.*

In his artists and thinkers Hauptmann has illustrated the excessive nervousness of the age. Michael Kramer rises above it; Johannes Vockerat and Gabriel Schilling succumb. And beside these men there usually arises the sharply realised figure of the destroying woman — innocent and helpless in Käthe Vockerat, trivial and obtuse in Alwine Lachmann, or impelled by a devouring sexual egotism in Eveline Schilling and Hanna Elias.

Hauptmann's creative power culminates, however, as he approaches the common folk. These are of two kinds: the Berlin populace and the Silesian peasants. The world of the former in all its shrewdness, impudence and varied lusts he has set down with quiet and cruel exactness in *The Beaver Coat* and *The Conflagration.* Mrs. Wolff, the protagonist of both plays, rises into a figure of epic breadth — a sordid and finally almost tragic embodiment of worldliness and cunning. When he approaches the peasants of his own countryside

his touch is less hard, his method not quite so remorseless. And thus, perhaps, it comes about that in the face of these characters the art of criticism can only set down a confirmatory: "They are!" Old Deans in *The Heart of Midlothian,* Tulliver and the Dodson sisters in *The Mill on the Floss* illustrate the nature of Hauptmann's incomparable projection of simple men and women. Here, in Dryden's phrase, is God's plenty: the morose pathos of Beipst (*Before Dawn*); the vanity and faithfulness of Friebe (*The Reconciliation*); the sad fatalism of Hauffe (*Drayman Henschel*); the instinctive kindliness of the nurse and the humorous fortitude of Mrs. Lehmann (*Lonely Lives*); the vulgar good nature of Liese Bänsch (*Michael Kramer*); the trivial despair of Pauline and the primitive passion of Mrs. John (*The Rats*); the massive greatness of old Hilse's rock-like patience and the sudden impassioned protest of Luise (*The Weavers*); the deep trouble of Henschel's simple soul and the hunted purity of Rose Bernd — these qualities and these characters transcend the convincingness of mere art. Like the rain drenched mould, the black trees against the sky, the noise of the earth's waters, they are among the abiding elements of a native and familiar world.

VII

Such, then, is the naturalistic drama of Hauptmann. By employing the real speech of man, by emphasising being rather than action, by creating the very atmosphere and gesture of life, it succeeds in presenting characters whose vital truth

achieves the intellectual beauty and moral energy of great art.

Early in his career, however, an older impulse stirred in Hauptmann. He remembered that he was a poet. Pledged to naturalism by personal loyalty and public combat he broke through its self-set limitations tentatively and invented for that purpose the dream-technique of *The Assumption of Hannele* (1893). Pure imagination was outlawed in those years and verse was a pet aversion of the consistent naturalists. Hence both were transferred to the world of dreams which has an unquestionable reality, however subjective, but in which the will cannot govern the shaping faculties of the soul. The letter of the naturalistic law was adhered to, though Hannele's visions have a richness and sweetness, the verses of the angels a winsomeness and majesty which transcend any possible dream of the poor peasant child. The external encouragement which the attempt met was great, for with it Hauptmann conquered the Royal Playhouse in Berlin.

Three years later he openly vindicated the possibility of the modern poetic drama by writing *The Sunken Bell,* his most far-reaching success both on the stage and in the study. In it appears for the first time the disciplinary effect of naturalism upon literature in its loftiest mood. The blank verse is the best in the German drama, the only German blank verse, in truth, that satisfies an ear trained on the graver and more flexible harmony of English; the lyrical portions are of sufficient if inferior beauty. But there is no trace of the pseudo-heroic psychology of the romantic play. The interpretation of life is thoroughly poetic, but

it is based on fact. The characters have tangible reality; they have the idiosyncrasies of men. The pastor is profoundly true, and so is Magda, though the interpretative power of poetry raises both into the realm of the enduringly significant. Similarly Heinrich is himself, but also the creative worker of all time. Driven by his ideal from the warm hearthstones of men, he falters upon that frosty height: seeking to realise impersonal aims and rising to a hardy rapture, he is broken in strength at last by the "still, sad music of humanity."

Except for the half humorous and not wholly successful interlude of *Schluck and Jau,* Hauptmann neglected the poetic drama until 1902, when he presented on the boards of the famous *Burgtheater* at Vienna, *Henry of Aue.* There is little doubt but that this play will ultimately rank as the most satisfying poetic drama of its time. Less derivative and uncertain in quality than the plays of Stephen Phillips, less fantastic and externally brilliant than those of Rostand, it has a soundness of subject matter, a serene nobility of mood, a solidity of verse technique above the reach of either the French or the English poet. Hauptmann chose as his subject the legend known for nearly seven hundred years through the beautiful Middle High German poem of Hartmann von der Aue — the legend of that great knight and lord who was smitten with leprosy, and whom, according to the mediæval belief, a pure maiden desired to heal through the shedding of her blood. But God. before the sacrifice could be consummated, cleansed the knight's body and permitted to him and the maiden a united temporal happiness. This story Hauptmann takes exactly as he

finds it. But the characters are made to live with a new life. The stark mediæval conventions are broken and the old legend becomes living truth. The maiden is changed from an infant saint fleeing a vale of tears into a girl in whom the first sweet passions of life blend into an exaltation half sexual and half religious, but pure with the purity of a great flame. The miracle too remains, but it is the miracle of love that subdues the despairing heart, that reconciles man to his universe, and that slays the imperiousness of self. Thus Henry, firmly individualised as he is, becomes in some sense, like all the greater protagonists of the drama, the spirit of man confronting eternal and recurrent problems. The minor figures — Gottfried, Brigitte, Ottacker — have the homely and delightful truth that is the gift of naturalism to modern literature.

Hauptmann's next play was a naturalistic tragedy, one of the best in that order, *Rose Bernd.* Then followed, from 1905 to 1910, a series of plays in which he let the creative imagination range over time and space. In *Elga* he tells the story of an old sorrow by means of the dream-technique of *Hannele;* in *And Pippa Dances,* he lets the flame of life and love flicker its iridescent glory before man and super-man, savage and artist; in *The Maidens of the Mount* he celebrates the dream of life which is life's dearest part; in *Charlemagne's Hostage* and in *Griselda* he returns to the interpretation and humanising of history and legend.

The last of these plays is the most characteristic and important. It takes up the old story of patient Grizzel which the Clerk of Oxford told

Chaucer's pilgrims on the way to Canterbury. But a new motive animates the fable. Not to try her patience, not to edify womankind, does the count rob Griselda of her child. His burning and exclusive love is jealous of the pangs and triumphs of her motherhood in which he has no share. It is passion desiring the utter absorption of its object that gives rise to the tragic element of the story. But over the whole drama there plays a blithe and living air in which, once more, authentic human beings are seen with their smiling or earnest faces.

A stern and militant naturalistic drama, *The Rats* (1911), and yet another play of the undoing of the artist through the woman, *Gabriel Schilling's Flight* (1912), close, for the present, the tale of Hauptmann's dramatic works.

VIII

These works, viewed in their totality, take on a higher significance than resides in the literary power of any one of them. Hauptmann's career began in the years when the natural sciences, not content with their proper triumphs, threatened to engulf art, philosophy and religion; in the years when a keen and tender social consciousness, brooding over the temporal welfare of man, lost sight of his eternal good. And so Hauptmann begins by illustrating the laws of heredity and pleading, through a creative medium, for social justice. The tacit assumptions of these early plays are stringently positivistic: body and soul are the obverse and reverse of a single substance; earth is the boundary of man's hopes.

With *The Assumption of Hannele* a change comes over the spirit of his work. A thin, faint voice vibrates in that play — the voice of a soul yearning for a warmer ideal. But the rigorous teachers of Hauptmann's youth had graven their influence upon him, and the new faith announced by Heinrich in *The Sunken Bell* is still a kind of scientific paganism. In *Michael Kramer* (1900), however, he has definitely conquered the positivistic denial of the overwhelming reality of the ultimate problems. For it is after some solution of these that the great heart of Kramer cries out. In *Henry of Aue* the universe, no longer a harsh and monstrous mechanism, irradiates the human soul with the spirit of its own divinity. These utterances are, to be sure, dramatic and objective. But the author chooses his subject, determines the spirit of its treatment and thus speaks unmistakably.

Nor is directer utterance lacking. "The Green Gleam," Hauptmann writes in the delicately modelled prose of his *Griechischer Frühling*, "the Green Gleam, which mariners assert to have witnessed at times, appears at the last moment before the sun dips below the horizon. . . . The ancients must have known the Green Gleam. . . . I do not know whether that be true, but I feel a longing within me to behold it. I can imagine some Pure Fool, whose life consisted but in seeking it over lands and seas, in order to perish at last in the radiance of that strange and splendid light. Are we not all, perhaps, upon a similar quest? Are we not beings who have exhausted the realm of the senses and are athirst for other delights for both our senses and our souls?" The

author of *Before Dawn* has gone a long journey in the land of the spirit to the writing of these words, and of still others in *Gabriel Schilling's Flight:* "Behind this visible world another is hidden, so near at times that one might knock at its gate. . . ." But it is the journey which man himself has gone upon during the intervening years.

Thus Hauptmann's work has not only created a new technique of the drama; it has not only added unforgettable figures to the world of the imagination: it has also mirrored and interpreted the intellectual history of its time. His art sums up an epoch — an epoch full of knowledge and the restraints of knowledge, still prone, so often, before the mechanical in life and thought; but throughout all its immedicable scepticism full of strange yearnings and visited by flickering dreams; and even in its darkest years and days still stretching out hands in love of a farther shore. Once more the great artist, his vision fixed primarily upon his art, has most powerfully interpreted man to his own mind.

LUDWIG LEWISOHN.

BEFORE DAWN

The first performance of this drama took place on October 20 in the Lessing Theatre under the management of the Free Stage society. I take the occasion of the appearance of a new edition to express my hearty thanks to the directors of that society and, more especially, to Messrs. Otto Brahm and Paul Schlenther. May the future prove that, by defying petty considerations and by helping to give life to a work that had its origin in pure motives, they have deserved well of German art.

GERHART HAUPTMANN

Charlottenburg, October 20, 1889

'ACTING CHARACTERS

KRAUSE, *Farmer.*

MRS. KRAUSE, *his second wife.*

HELEN, MARTHA — KRAUSE'S *daughters by his first marriage.*

HOFFMANN, *Engineer,* MARTHA'S *husband.*

WILHELM KAHL, MRS. KRAUSE'S *nephew.*

MRS. SPILLER, MRS. KRAUSE'S *companion.*

ALFRED LOTH.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG.

BEIPST, *Workingman on* KRAUSE'S *farm.*

GUSTE, LIESE, MARIE — *Maid-servants on* KRAUSE'S *farm.*

BAER, *called "Hopping Baer."*

EDWARD, HOFFMANN'S *servant.*

MIELE, MRS. KRAUSE'S *housemaid.*

THE COACHMAN'S WIFE.

GOLISCH, *a Cowherd.*

A PACKET POST CARRIER.

THE FIRST ACT

The room is low: the floor is covered with excellent rugs. Modern luxury seems grafted upon the bareness of the peasant. On the wall, behind the dining-table, hangs a picture which represents a waggon with four horses driven by a carter in a blue blouse.

MIELE, *a vigorous peasant girl with a red, rather slow-witted face, opens the middle door and permits* ALFRED LOTH *to enter.* LOTH *is of middle height, broad-shouldered, thick-set, decided but somewhat awkward in his movements. His hair is blond, his eyes blue, his small moustache thin and very light; his whole face is bony and has an equably serious expression. His clothes are neat but nothing less than fashionable: light summer overcoat, a wallet hanging from the shoulder; cane.*

MIELE

Come in, please. I'll call Mr. Hoffmann right off. Won't you take a seat?

[*The glass-door that leads to the conservatory is violently thrust open, and a peasant woman, her face bluish red with rage, bursts in. She is not much better dressed than a washerwoman: naked, red arms, blue cotton-skirt and bodice, red*

dotted kerchief. She is in the early forties; her face is hard, sensual, malignant. The whole figure is, otherwise, well preserved.

Mrs. Krause

[*Screams.*] The hussies! . . . That's right! . . . The vicious critters! . . . Out with you! We don't give nothin'! . . . [*Half to* Miele, *half to* Loth.] He can work, he's got arms. Get out! You don't get nothin' here!

Loth

But Mrs. . . . Surely you will . . . my name is Loth . . . I am . . . I'd like to . . . I haven't the slightest in . . .

Miele

He wants to speak to Mr. Hoffmann.

Mrs. Krause

Oho! beggin' from my son-in-law. We know that kind o' thing! He ain't got nothin'; everything he's got he gets from us. Nothin' is his'n.

[*The door to the right is opened and* Hoffmann *thrusts his head in.*

Hoffmann

Mother, I must really beg of you! [*He enters and turns to* Loth.] What can I . . . Alfred! Old man! Well, I'll be blessed. You? That certainly is . . . well, that certainly is a great notion!

[Hoffmann *is thirty-three years old, slender, tall, thin. In his dress he affects the latest fashion, his hair is carefully tended; he wears costly rings, diamond-studs in his shirt-front and charms on his watch chain. His hair and moustache are black; the latter is luxurious and is most scrupulously cared for. His face is pointed, bird-like, the expression blurred, the eyes dark, lively, at times restless.*

Loth

It's by the merest accident, you know . . .

Hoffmann

[*Excited.*] Nothing pleasanter could have . . . Do take your things off, first of all! [*He tries to help him off with his wallet.*] — Nothing pleasanter or more unexpected could possibly — [*he has relieved* Loth *of his hat and cane and places both on a chair near the door*] — could possibly have happened to me just now — [*coming back*] — no, decidedly, nothing.

Loth

[*Taking off his wallet himself.*] It's by the merest chance that I've come upon you.

[*He places his wallet on the table in the foreground.*

Hoffmann

Sit down. You must be tired. Do sit down — please! D'you remember when you used to come

to see me you had a way of throwing yourself full-length on the sofa so that the springs groaned. Sometimes they broke, too. Very well, then, old fellow. Do as you used to do.

[Mrs. Krause's *face has taken on an expression of great astonishment. She has withdrawn.* Loth *sits down on one of the chairs that stand around the table in the foreground.*

Hoffmann

Won't you drink something? Whatever you say? Beer? Wine? Brandy? Coffee? Tea? Everything's in the house.

[Helen *comes reading from the conservatory. Her tall form, somewhat too plump, the arrangement of her blond, unusually luxuriant hair, the expression of her face, her modern gown, her gestures — in brief, her whole appearance cannot quite hide the peasant's daughter.*

Helen

Brother, you might . . . [*She discovers* Loth *and withdraws quickly.*] Oh, I beg pardon.

[*Exit.*

Hoffmann

Stay here, do!

Loth

Your wife?

HOFFMANN

No; her sister. Didn't you hear how she addressed me?

LOTH

No.

HOFFMANN

Good-looking, eh? But now, come on. Make up your mind. Coffee? Tea? Grog?

LOTH

No, nothing, thank you.

HOFFMANN

[*Offers him cigars.*] Here's something for you then. No! . . . Not even that?

LOTH

No, thank you.

HOFFMANN

Enviable frugality! [*He lights a cigar for himself and speaks the while.*] The ashes . . . I meant to say, tobacco . . . h-m . . . smoke of course . . . doesn't bother you, does it?

LOTH

No.

HOFFMANN

Ah, if I didn't get that much . . Good Lord, life anyhow! — But now, do me a favour; tell me

something. Ten years — you've hardly changed much, though — ten years, a nasty slice of time. How's Schn . . . Schnurz? That's what we called him, eh? And Fips, and the whole jolly bunch of those days? Haven't you been able to keep your eye on any of them?

Loth

Look here, is it possible you don't know?

Hoffmann

What?

Loth

That he shot himself.

Hoffmann

Who? Who's done that sort o' thing again?

Loth

Fips. Friedrich Hildebrandt.

Hoffmann

Oh come, that's impossible.

Loth

It's a fact. Shot himself in the Grunewald, on a very beautiful spot on the shore of the Havelsee. I was there. You have a view toward Spandau.

Hoffmann

Hm. Wouldn't have believed it of him. He wasn't much of a hero in other ways.

LOTH

That's the very reason why he shot himself.— He was conscientious, very conscientious.

HOFFMANN

Conscientious? I don't see.

LOTH

That was the very reason . . . otherwise he would probably not have done it.

HOFFMANN

I'm still in the dark.

LOTH

Well, you know what the colour of his political views was?

HOFFMANN

Oh, yes — green.

LOTH

Put it so, if you want to. You'll have to admit, at all events, that he was a very gifted fellow. And yet for five years he had to work as a stucco-worker, and for another five years he had to starve along, so to speak, on his own hook, and in addition he modelled his little statues.

HOFFMANN

And they were revolting. I want to be cheered by art . . . No, that kind of art wasn't a bit to my taste.

LOTH

Not exactly to mine either. Certain ideas had bitten themselves into his mind. However, last spring there was a competition for a monument. Some two-penny princeling was to be immortalised, I believe. Fips competed and — won. Shortly afterward, he killed himself.

HOFFMANN

I don't see that that throws any ray of light on his so-called conscientiousness. I call that sort of thing silly and highfalutin.

LOTH

That is the common view.

HOFFMANN

I'm very sorry, but I'm afraid I can't help sharing it.

LOTH

Well, it can make no difference to him now, what . . .

HOFFMANN

Oh; anyhow, let's drop the subject. At bottom I'm just as sorry for him as you can be. But now that he is dead, the good fellow, tell me something of yourself. What have you been doing? How has the world used you?

LOTH

It has used me as it was my business to expect. Didn't you hear anything about me at all? From the papers, I mean?

HOFFMANN

[*Somewhat embarrassed.*] Not that I know of.

LOTH

Nothing of that business at Leipzig?

HOFFMANN

Ah, yes, that! Yes, yes . . . I believe so . . . but nothing definite.

LOTH

Well, then, the matter was as follows —

HOFFMANN

[*Laying his hand on* LOTH'S *arm.*] Before you begin, won't you take anything at all?

LOTH

Perhaps later.

HOFFMANN

Not even a little glass of brandy?

LOTH

No; that least of all.

HOFFMANN

Well, then I'll take a little . . . There's nothing better for the stomach. [*He gets a bottle and two little glasses from the sideboard and places them on the table before* LOTH.] Grand champagne, finest brand. I can recommend it. Won't you really?

LOTH

No, thank you.

HOFFMANN

[*Tilting the contents of the glass into his mouth.*] Ah-h — well, now I'm all ears.

LOTH

To put it briefly, I got into a nasty mess.

HOFFMANN

The sentence was two years, wasn't it?

LOTH

Quite right. You seem to be informed after all. Yes, I was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, and afterwards they expelled me from the university too. And at that time I was just — twenty-one. However, during those two years I wrote my first book on economics. In spite of that I couldn't truthfully say that it was very good fun to be behind the bars.

HOFFMANN

Lord, what idiots we were! It's queer. And we had really taken the thing into our heads in good earnest. I can't help thinking, old man, that it was sheer puerility. The idea! A dozen green kids like ourselves to go to America and found . . . *we* found . . . a model state. Delicious notion!

LOTH

Puerility? Ah well, in some ways no doubt it was. We certainly underestimated the difficulty of such an undertaking.

HOFFMANN

And that you really did go to America, in all seriousness, and with empty hands . . . Why, think, man, what it means to acquire land and foundation for a model state with empty hands. That was almost cr . . . At all events it was unique in its naïveté.

LOTH

And yet I'm particularly satisfied with the result of my American trip.

HOFFMANN

[*Laughing with a touch of boisterousness.*] Cold water treatment. That was an excellent result, if that's what you mean . . .

LOTH

It may well be that I cooled down quite a little. But that process is hardly peculiar to myself. It is one which every human being undergoes. But it's a far cry from that to failing to realise the value of those . . . well, let's call them, our hot-headed days. And it wasn't so frightfully simple-minded, as you represent it.

HOFFMANN

Well, I don't know about that.

LOTH

All you have to do is to think of the average silliness that surrounded us in those days: the fraternity goings on at the universities, the swilling, the duelling. And what was all the noise about? It was about Hecuba, as Fips used to say. Well, we at least, didn't make a fuss about Hecuba; we had our attention fixed on the highest aims of humanity. And, in addition to that, those silly times cleared me thoroughly of all prejudices. I took my leave of sham religion and sham morality and a good deal else . . .

HOFFMANN

I'm perfectly prepared to admit that much. If, when all's said and done, I am an open-minded, enlightened man to-day, I owe it, as I wouldn't dream of denying, to the days of our intercourse! I am the last man to deny that. In fact I'm not in *any* respect a monster. Only you mustn't try to run your head through a stone wall.— You mustn't try to force out the evils under which, more's the pity, the present generation suffers, only to replace them by worse ones. What you've got to do is — to let things take their natural course. What is to be, will be! You've got to proceed practically, practically! And you will recall that I emphasised that just as much in those days as now. And that principle has paid. And that's just it. All of you, yourself included, proceed in a most unpractical way.

LOTH

I wish you'd explain just how you mean that.

HOFFMANN

It's as simple as . . . You don't make use of your capabilities. Take yourself, for instance: a fellow with your knowledge, energy and what not! What road would have been closed to you? Instead of going ahead, what is it you do? You *compromise* yourself, at the very start, to *such* a degree, that . . . well, honestly, old man, didn't you regret it once in a while?

LOTH

I can't very well regret the fact that I was condemned innocently.

HOFFMANN

As to that, of course, I can't judge.

LOTH

You will be able to do so at once when I tell you that the indictment declared that I had called our club, "Vancouver Island," into being purely for purposes of party agitation. In addition I was said to have collected funds for party purposes. Now you know very well that we were thoroughly in earnest in regard to our ambitions of founding a colony. And, as far as collecting money goes — you have said yourself that we were all empty-handed together. The indictment was a misrepresentation from beginning to end, and, as a former member, you ought to . . .

HOFFMANN

Hold on, now. I wasn't really a member. As to the rest, of course, I believe you. Judges are,

after all, only human. You must consider that. In any event, to proceed quite practically, you should have avoided the very *appearance* of that sort of thing. Take it all in all: I have wondered at you often enough since then — editor of the *Workingmen's Tribune,* the obscurest of hole and corner sheets — parliamentary candidate of the dear mob! And what did you get out of it all? Don't misunderstand me! I am the last man to be lacking in sympathy with the common people. But *if* something is to be effected, it must be effected from above. In fact that's the only way in which anything can be done. The people never know what they really need. It's this trying to lift things from beneath that I call — running your head through a stone wall.

LOTH

I'm afraid I don't get a very clear notion of your drift.

HOFFMANN

What I mean? Well now, look at me! My hands are free: I am in a position to do something for an ideal end.— I think I can say that the practical part of my programme has been pretty well carried out. And all you fellows, always with empty hands — what can you do?

LOTH

True. From what one hears you are in a fair way to become a Rothschild.

HOFFMANN

[*Flattered.*] You do me too much honour — at least, for the present. Who said that, anyhow? A man sticks to a good thing, and that, naturally, brings its reward. But who was it said that?

LOTH

It was over there in Jauer. Two gentlemen were conversing at the next table.

HOFFMANN

Aha! H-m. I have enemies. And what did they have to say?

LOTH

Nothing of importance. But I heard from them that you had retired for the present to the estate of your parents-in-law.

HOFFMANN

People have a way of finding things out; haven't they? My dear friend, you'd never believe how a man in my position is spied on at every step. That's another one of the evils of wealth . . . But it is this way, you see: I'm expecting the confinement of my wife in the quiet and the healthy air here.

LOTH

What do you do for a physician? Surely in such cases a good physician is of the highest importance. And here, in this village . . .

HOFFMANN

Ah, but that's just it! The physician here is an unusually capable one. And, do you know, I've found this out: in a doctor, conscientiousness counts for more than genius.

LOTH

Perhaps it is an essential concomitant of a physician's genius.

HOFFMANN

Maybe so. Anyhow, our doctor *has* a conscience. He's a bit of an idealist — more or less our kind. His success among the miners and the peasants is simply phenomenal! Sometimes, I must say, he isn't an easy man to bear, he's got a mixture of hardness and sentimentality. But, as I said before, I know how to value conscientiousness; no doubt about that. But before I forget . . . I do attach some importance to it . . . a man ought to know what he has to look out for . . . Listen! . . . Tell me . . . I see it in your face. Those gentlemen at the next table had nothing good to say of me? Tell me, please, what they did say.

LOTH

I really ought not to do that, for I was going to beg one hundred crowns of you, literally beg, for there is hardly any chance of my ever being able to return them.

HOFFMANN

[*Draws a cheque-book from his inner pocket, makes out a cheque and hands it to* LOTH.] Any branch of the Imperial Bank will cash it . . . It's simply a pleasure . . .

LOTH

Your promptness surpasses all expectation. Well, I accept it with gratitude, and you know — it could be worse spent.

HOFFMANN

[*Somewhat rhetorically.*] A labourer is worthy of his hire. But now, Loth, have the goodness to tell me what the gentlemen in question . . .

LOTH

I dare say they talked nonsense.

HOFFMANN

Tell me in spite of that, please. I'm simply interested, quite simply interested — that's all.

LOTH

They discussed the fact that you had violently forced another man out of his position here — a contractor named Mueller.

HOFFMANN

Of course! The same old story.

Pierce Library
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Loth

The man, they said, was betrothed to your present wife.

Hoffmann

So he was. And what else?

Loth

I tell you these things just as I heard them, for I assume that it is of some importance to you to be acquainted with the exact nature of the slander.

Hoffmann

Quite right. And so?

Loth

So far as I could make out this Mueller was said to have had the contract for the construction of a stretch of mountain railroad here.

Hoffmann

Yes, with a wretched capital of ten thousand crowns. When he came to see that the money wouldn't go far enough, he was in haste to make a catch of one of the Witzdorf farmers' daughters; the honour was to have fallen to my wife.

Loth

They said that he had his arrangement with the daughter, and you had made yours with the father.— Next he shot himself, didn't he? — And you finished the construction of his section of the road and made a great deal of money out of it?

HOFFMANN

There's an element of truth in all that. Of course, I could give you a very different notion of how those things hung together. Perhaps they knew a few more of these edifying anecdotes.

LOTH

There was one thing, I am bound to tell you, that seemed to excite them particularly: they computed what an enormous business you were doing in coal now, and they called you — well, it wasn't exactly flattering. In short they asserted that you had persuaded the stupid farmers of the neighbourhood, over some champagne, to sign a contract by which the exploitation of all the coal mined on their property was turned over to you at a ridiculously small rental.

HOFFMANN

[*Touched on the raw, gets up.*] I'll tell you something, Loth . . . Pshaw, why concern oneself with it at all. I vote that we think of supper. I'm savagely hungry — yes, quite savagely.

[*He presses the button of an electric connection, the wire of which hangs down over the sofa in the form of a green cord. The ringing of an electric bell is heard.*

LOTH

Well, if you want to keep me here, then have the kindness . . . I'd like to brush up a bit first.

HOFFMANN

In a moment — everything that's necessary . . . [EDWARD, *a servant in livery, enters.*] Edward, take this gentleman to the guest chamber.

EDWARD

Very well, sir.

HOFFMANN

[*Pressing* LOTH's *hand.*] I wonder if you'd mind coming down to supper in about fifteen minutes — at most.

LOTH

That's ample time. See you later.

HOFFMANN

Yes, see you later.

[EDWARD *opens the door and lets* LOTH *precede him. Both go out.* HOFFMANN *scratches the back of his head, looks thoughtfully at the floor and then approaches the door at the right. He has just touched the knob when* HELEN, *who has entered hastily by the glass door, calls to him.*

HELEN

Brother! Who was that?

HOFFMANN

That was one of my college chums, in fact, the oldest of them, Alfred Loth.

HELEN

[*Quickly.*] Has he gone again?

HOFFMANN

No; he's going to eat supper with us. Possibly . . . yes, possibly he may spend the night here.

HELEN

Heavens! Then I shan't come to supper.

HOFFMANN

But Helen!

HELEN

What is the use of my meeting cultivated people! I might just as well get as boorish as all the rest here!

HOFFMANN

Oh, these eternal fancies! In fact you will do me a real favour if you will order the arrangements for supper. Be so kind. I'd like to have things a bit festive, because I believe that he has something up his sleeve.

HELEN

What do you mean by that: has something up his sleeve?

HOFFMANN

Mole's work . . . digging, digging.— You can't possibly understand that. Anyhow, I may be mistaken, for I've avoided touching on that subject

so far. At all events, have everything as inviting as possible. That's the easiest way, after all, of accomplishing something with people . . . Champagne, of course. Have the lobsters come from Hamburg?

HELEN

I believe they came this morning.

HOFFMANN

Very well. Then — lobsters! [*A violent knocking is heard.*] Come in!

PARCEL POST CARRIER

[*Enters with a box under his arm. His voice has a sing-song inflection.*] A box.

HELEN

Where from?

PARCEL POST CARRIER

Ber-lin.

HOFFMANN

Quite right. No doubt the baby's outfit from Hertzog. [*He looks at the package and takes the bill.*] Yes, these are the things from Hertzog.

HELEN

This whole box full. Oh, that's overdoing!

HOFFMANN *pays the carrier.*

Parcel Post Carrier

[*Still in his sing-song.*] I wish you a good evening. [*Exit.*

Hoffmann

Why is that overdoing?

Helen

Why, because there's enough here to fit out at least three babies.

Hoffmann

Did you take a walk with my wife?

Helen

What am I to do if she's so easily tired?

Hoffmann

Nonsense! Easily tired! She makes me utterly wretched! An hour and a half . . . I wish, for goodness' sake, she would do as the doctor orders. What is the use of having a doctor, if . . .

Helen

Then put your foot down and get rid of that Spiller woman! What am I to do against an old creature like that who always confirms her in her own notions!

Hoffmann

But what can I do — a man — a mere man? And, furthermore, you know my mother-in-law! Don't you?

HELEN

[*Bitterly.*] I do.

HOFFMANN

Where is she now?

HELEN

Spiller has been getting her up in grand style ever since Mr. Loth came. She will probably go through one of her performances at supper.

HOFFMANN

[*Once more absorbed in his own thoughts and pacing the room, violently.*] This is the last time, I give you my word, that I'm going to await such things in this house — the last time, so help me!

HELEN

Yes, you're lucky. You can go where you please.

HOFFMANN

In my house the wretched relapse into that frightful vice would most certainly not have occurred.

HELEN

Don't make me responsible for it. She did not get the brandy from me! Get rid of the Spiller woman, I tell you. Oh, if only I were a man!

HOFFMANN

[*Sighing.*] Oh, if only it were over and done with! — [*Speaking from the door to the right.*]

Anyhow, sister, do me the favour and have the supper-table really appetising. I'll just attend to a little matter meanwhile.

HELEN

[*Rings the electric bell.* MIELE *enters.*] Miele, set the table, and tell Edward to put champagne on ice and open four dozen oysters.

MIELE

[*With sullen impudence.*] You c'n tell him yerself. He don't take orders from me. He's always sayin' he was hired by Mr. Hoffmann.

HELEN

Then, at least, send him in to me.

[MIELE *goes.* HELEN *steps in front of the mirror and adjusts various details in her toilet. In the meantime* EDWARD *enters.*

HELEN

[*Still before the mirror.*] Edward, put champagne on ice and open oysters. Mr. Hoffmann wishes it.

EDWARD

Very well, Miss.

[*As* EDWARD *leaves, a knocking is heard at the middle door.*

HELEN

[*Startled.*] Dear me! [*Timidly.*] Come in! [*Louder and more firmly.*] Come in!

LOTH

[*Enters without bowing.*] Ah, I beg pardon. I didn't mean to intrude. My name is Loth.

HELEN *bows. Her gesture smacks of the dancing school.*

HOFFMANN

[*His voice is heard through the closed door.*] My dear people: don't be formal! I'll be with you in a moment. Loth, my sister-in-law, Helen Krause! And, sister, my friend, Alfred Loth! Please consider yourselves introduced.

HELEN

Oh, what a way of . . .

LOTH

I don't take it ill of him. As I have often been told, I am myself more than half a barbarian when correct manners are concerned. But if I intruded upon you, I . . .

HELEN

Not in the least; oh, not in the least, believe me. [*A pause of constraint.*] Indeed, indeed, it is most kind of you to have looked up my brother-in-law. He often complains that . . . rather, regrets that the friends of his youth have forgotten him so entirely.

LOTH

Yes, it just happened so this time. I've always been in Berlin and thereabouts and had no idea

what had become of Hoffmann. I haven't been back in Silesia since my student days at Breslau.

HELEN

And so you came upon him quite by chance.

LOTH

Yes, quite — and, what is more, in the very spot where I've got to pursue my investigations.

HELEN

Investigations in Witzdorf! In this wretched little hole. Ah, you're jesting. It isn't possible.

LOTH

You say: wretched? Yet there is a very unusual degree of wealth here.

HELEN

Oh, of course, in that respect . . .

LOTH

I've been continually astonished. I can assure you that such farms are not to be found elsewhere; they seem literally steeped in abundance.

HELEN

You are quite right. There's more than one stable here in which the cows and horses feed from marble mangers and racks of German silver! It is all due to the coal which was found under our fields and which turned the poor peasants rich

almost in the twinkling of an eye. [*She points to the picture in the background.*] Do you see — my grandfather was a freight carter. The little property here belonged to him, but he could not get a living out of his bit of soil and so he had to haul freight. That's a picture of him in his blue blouse; they still wore blouses like that in those days. My father, when he was young, wore one too.— No! When I said "wretched" I didn't mean that. Only it's so desolate here. There's nothing, nothing for the mind. Life is empty . . . it's enough to kill one.

Miele *and* Edward *pass to and fro, busy laying the table to the right in the background.*

Loth

Aren't there balls or parties once in a while?

Helen

Not even that! The farmers gamble, hunt, drink . . . What is there to be seen all the long day? [*She has approached the window and points out.*] *Such* figures, mainly.

Loth

H-m! Miners.

Helen

Some are going to the mine, some are coming from the mine: all day, all day . . . At least, I seem always to see them. Do you suppose I even care to go into the street alone? At most I slip through the back gate out into the fields. And

they are such a rough set! The way they stare at one — so menacing and morose as if one were actually guilty of some crime. Sometimes, in winter, when we go sleighing, they come in the darkness, in great gangs, over the hills, through the storm, and, instead of making way, they walk stubbornly in front of the horses. Then, sometimes the farmers use the handles of their whips; it's the only way they can get through. And then the miners curse behind us. Ugh! I've been so terribly frightened sometimes!

LOTH

And isn't it strange that I have come here for the sake of these very people of whom you are so much afraid.

HELEN

Oh, surely not . . .

LOTH

Quite seriously. These people interest me more than any one else here.

HELEN

No one excepted?

LOTH

No one.

HELEN

Not even my brother-in-law?

LOTH

No! For my interest in these people is different and of an altogether higher nature. But you must forgive me . . . You can't be expected to follow me there.

HELEN

And why not? Indeed, I understand you very well . . . [*She drops a letter inadvertently which* LOTH *stoops to pick up.*] Don't bother . . . it's of no importance; only an indifferent boarding-school correspondence.

LOTH

So you went to boarding-school?

HELEN

Yes, in Herrnhut. You mustn't think that I'm so wholly . . . No, no, I do understand.

LOTH

You see, these workingmen interest me for their own sake.

HELEN

To be sure. And a miner like that is very interesting, if you look upon him in that way. Why, there are places where you never see one; but if you have them daily before your eyes . . .

LOTH

Even if you have them daily before your eyes, Miss Krause. Indeed, I think that is necessary if

one is to discover what is truly interesting about them.

HELEN

Dear me! If it's so hard to discover — I mean what is interesting about them!

LOTH

Well, it is interesting, for instance that these people, as you say, always look so menacing and so morose.

HELEN

Why do you think that *that* is particularly interesting?

LOTH

Because it is not the usual thing. The rest of us look that way only sometimes and by no means always.

HELEN

Yes, but why do they always look so . . . so full of hatred and so surly? There must be some reason for that.

LOTH

Just so. And it is this very reason that I am anxious to discover.

HELEN

Oh, don't! . . . Now you're making fun of me! What good would it do you, even if you knew that?

LOTH

One might perhaps find ways and means to remove the cause that makes these people so joyless and so full of hatred; one might perhaps make them happier.

HELEN

[*Slightly confused.*] I must confess freely that now . . . And yet perhaps just now I begin to understand you a little. Only it is so strange, so new, so utterly new . . .

HOFFMANN

[*Entering through the door at the right. He has a number of letters in his hand.*] Well, here I am again.— Edward, see to it that these letters reach the post-office before eight o'clock. [*He hands the letters to the servant, who withdraws.*] Well, dear people, now we can eat! Outrageously hot here! September and such heat! [*He lifts a bottle of champagne from the cooler.*] *Veuve Cliquot!* Edward knows my secret passions! [*He turns to* LOTH.] You've had quite a lively argument, eh? [*Approaches the table, which has now been laid and which groans under delicacies. Rubbing his hands.*] Well, that looks very good indeed! [*With a sly look in* LOTH's *direction.*] Don't you think it does? — By the way, sister! We're going to have company: William Kahl. He has been seen in the yard.

HELEN *makes a gesture of disgust.*

HOFFMANN

My dear girl! You almost act as if I . . . How can I help it? D'you suppose I invited him?

[*Heavy steps are heard in the outer hall.*] Ah! "Misfortune strides apace!"

Kahl *enters without having first knocked. He is twenty-four years old: a clumsy peasant who is evidently concerned, so far as possible, to make a show not only as a refined but, more especially, as a wealthy man. His features are coarse; his predominant expression is one of stupid cunning. He wears a green jacket, a gay velvet waist-coat, dark trousers and patent-leather top-boots. His head-covering is a green forester's hat with a cock's feather. His jacket has buttons of stag's horn and stag's teeth depend from his watch-chain. He stammers.*

Kahl

G-good evenin', everybody!

[*He sees* Loth, *is much embarrassed and, standing still, cuts a rather sorry figure.*

Hoffmann

[*Steps up to him and shakes hands with him encouragingly.*] Good evening, Mr. Kahl.

Helen

[*Ungraciously.*] Good evening.

Kahl

[*Strides with heavy steps diagonally across the room to* Helen *and takes her hand.*] Evenin' t'you, Nellie.

HOFFMANN

[*To* LOTH.] Permit me to introduce our neighbour's son, Mr. Kahl.

[KAHL *grins and fidgets with his hat. Constrained silence.*

HOFFMANN

Come, let's sit down, then. Is anybody missing? Ah, our mama! Miele, request Mrs. Krause to come to supper.

[MIELE *leaves by the middle door.*

MIELE

[*Is heard in the hall, calling out.*] Missus! Missus!! You're to come down — to come'n eat!

[HELEN *and* HOFFMANN *exchange a look of infinite comprehension and laugh. Then, by a common impulse, they look at* LOTH.

HOFFMANN

[*To* LOTH.] Rustic simplicity!

MRS. KRAUSE *appears, incredibly overdressed. Silk and costly jewels. Her dress and bearing betray hard arrogance, stupid pride and half-mad vanity.*

HOFFMANN

Ah, there is mama! Permit me to introduce to you my friend Dr. Loth.

MRS. KRAUSE

[*Half-curtsies, peasant-fashion.*] I take the liberty! [*After a brief pause.*] Eh, but Doctor, you

mustn't bear me a grudge, no, you mustn't at all. I've got to excuse myself before you right away — [*she speaks with increasing fluency*] — excuse myself on account o' the way I acted a while ago. You know, y'understan', we' get a powerful lot o' tramps here right along . . . 'Tain't reasonable to believe the trouble we has with them beggars. And they steals exackly like magpies. It ain't as we're stingy. We don't have to be thinkin' and thinkin' before we spends a penny, no, nor before we spends a pound neither. Now, old Louis Krause's wife, she's a close one, worst kind you see, she wouldn't give a crittur that much! Her old man died o' rage because he lost a dirty little two-thousand, playin' cards. No, we ain't that kind. You see that sideboard over there. That cost me two hundred crowns, not countin' the freight even. Baron Klinkow hisself couldn't have nothin' better.

Mrs. Spiller *has entered shortly after* Mrs. Krause. *She is small, slightly deformed and gotten up in her mistress's cast-off garments. While* Mrs. Krause *is speaking she looks up at her with a certain devout attention. She is about fifty-five years old. Every time she exhales her breath she utters a gentle moan, which is regularly audible, even when she speaks, as a soft* — m.

Mrs. Spiller

[*In a servile, affectedly melancholy, minor tone. Very softly.*] His lordship has exactly the identical sideboard — m —.

Helen

[*To* Mrs. Krause.] Mama, don't you think we had better sit down first and then —

Mrs. Krause

[*Turns with lightning-like rapidity to* Helen *and transfixes her with a withering look; harshly and masterfully.*] Is that proper?

[*She is about to sit down but remembers that grace has not been said. Mechanically she folds her hands without, however, mastering her malignity.*

Mrs. Spiller

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest.
May thy gifts to us be blest.

[*All take their seats noisily. The embarrassing situation is tided over by the passing and repassing of dishes, which takes some time.*

Hoffmann

[*To* Loth.] Help yourself, old fellow, won't you? Oysters?

Loth

I'll try them. They're the first I've ever eaten.

Mrs. Krause

[*Has just sucked down an oyster noisily.*] This season, you mean.

LOTH

No, I mean at all.

[MRS. KRAUSE *and* MRS. SPILLER *exchange a look.*

HOFFMANN

[*To* KAHL, *who is squeezing a lemon with his teeth.*] Haven't seen you for two days, Mr. Kahl. Have you been busy shooting mice?

KAHL

N-naw . . .

HOFFMANN

[*To* LOTH.] Mr. Kahl, I must tell you, is passionately fond of hunting.

KAHL

M-m-mice is i-infamous amphibies.

HELEN

[*Bursts out.*] It's too silly. He can't see anything wild or tame without killing it.

KAHL

Las' night I sh-shot our ol' s-sow.

LOTH

Then I suppose that shooting is your chief occupation.

MRS. KRAUSE

Mr. Kahl, he just does that fer his own private pleasure.

MRS. SPILLER

Forest, game and women — as his Excellency the Minister von Schadendorf often used to say.

KAHL

'N d-day after t-t'morrow we're g-goin' t' have p-pigeon sh-sh-shooting.

LOTH

What is that — pigeon shooting?

HELEN

Ah, I can't bear such things. Surely it's a very merciless sport. Rough boys who throw stones at window panes are better employed.

HOFFMANN

You go too far, Helen.

HELEN

I don't know. According to my feeling it's far more sensible to break windows, than to tether pigeons to a post and then shoot bullets into them.

HOFFMANN

Well, Helen, after all, you must consider . . .

LOTH

[*Using his knife and fork with energy.*] It is a shameful barbarity.

KAHL

Aw! *Them* few pigeons!

MRS. SPILLER

[*To* LOTH.] Mr. Kahl, you know, has m-more than two-hundred of them in his dove-cote.

LOTH

All hunting is barbarity.

HOFFMANN

But an ineradicable one. Just now, for instance, five hundred live foxes are wanted in the market, and all foresters in this neighbourhood and in other parts of Germany are busy snaring the animals.

LOTH

What are all those foxes wanted for?

HOFFMANN

They are sent to England, where they will enjoy the honour of being hunted from their very cages straight to death by members of the aristocracy.

LOTH

Mohammedan or Christian — a beast's a beast.

HOFFMANN

May I pass you some lobster, mother?

MRS. KRAUSE

I guess so. They're good this here season.

MRS. SPILLER

Madame has such a delicate palate.

MRS. KRAUSE

[*To* LOTH.] I suppose you ain't ever et lobsters neither, Doctor?

LOTH

Yes, I have eaten lobsters now and then — in the North, by the sea, in Warnemuende, where I was born.

MRS. KRAUSE

[*To* KAHL.] Times an' times a person don't know what *to* eat no more. Eh, William.

KAHL

Y-y're r-right there, cousin, G-God knows.

EDWARD

[*Is about to pour champagne into* LOTH's *glass.*] Champagne, sir.

LOTH

[*Covers his glass with his hand.*] No, thank you.

HOFFMANN

Come now, don't be absurd.

HELEN

What? Don't you drink?

LOTH

No, Miss Krause.

HOFFMANN

Well, now, look here, old man. That is, you must admit, rather tiresome.

LOTH

If I were to drink I should only grow more tiresome.

HELEN

That is most interesting, Doctor.

LOTH

[*Untactfully.*] That I grow even more tiresome when I drink wine?

HELEN

[*Somewhat taken aback.*] No, oh, no. But that you do not drink . . . do not drink at all, I mean.

LOTH

And why is that particularly interesting?

HELEN

[*Blushing.*] It is not the usual thing.
[*She grows redder and more embarrassed.*

LOTH

[*Clumsily.*] You are quite right, unhappily.

MRS. KRAUSE

[*To* LOTH.] It costs us fifteen shillin's a bottle. You needn't be scared to drink it. We gets it straight from Rheims; we ain't givin' you nothin' cheap; we wouldn't want it ourselves.

MRS. SPILLER

Ah, you can believe — m-me, Doctor: if his Excellency, the Minister von Schadendorf, had been able to keep *such* a table . . .

KAHL

I couldn't live without my wine.

HELEN

[*To* LOTH.] Do tell us why you don't drink?

LOTH

I'll do that very gladly, I . . .

HOFFMANN

Oh, pshaw, old fellow. [*He takes the bottle from the servant in order to press the wine upon* LOTH.] Just think how many merry hours we used to spend in the old days . . .

Loth

Please don't take the trouble . . .

Hoffmann

Drink to-day — this one time.

Loth

It's quite useless.

Hoffmann

As a special favour to me.

[Hoffmann *is about to pour the wine;* Loth *resists. A slight conflict ensues.*

Loth

No, no . . . as I said before . . . No! . . . no, thank you.

Hoffmann

Don't be offended, but that, surely, is a mere foolish whim.

Kahl

[*To* Mrs. Spiller.] A man that don't want nothin' has had enough.

[Mrs. Spiller *nods resignedly.*

Hoffmann

Anyhow, if you let a man have his will what more can you do for him. But I can tell you this much: without a glass of wine at dinner . . .

LOTH

And a glass of beer at breakfast . . .

HOFFMANN

Very well; why not? A glass of beer is a very healthy thing.

LOTH

And a nip of brandy now and then . . .

HOFFMANN

Ah, well, if one couldn't get that much out of life! You'll never succeed in making an ascetic of me. You can't rob life of every stimulus.

LOTH

I'm not so sure of that. I am thoroughly content with the normal stimuli that reach my nervous system.

HOFFMANN

And a company that sit together with dry throats always has been and always will be a damnably weary and boresome one — with which, as a rule, I'd care to have very little to do.

MRS. KRAUSE

An' all them aristocrats drinks a whole lot.

MRS. SPILLER

[*Devoutly confirming her mistress' remark by an inclination of her body.*] It is easy for gentlemen to drink a great deal of wine.

LOTH

[*To* HOFFMANN.] My experience is quite to the contrary. As a rule, I am bored at a table where a great deal is drunk.

HOFFMANN

Oh, of course, it's got to be done in moderation.

LOTH

What do you call moderation?

HOFFMANN

Well, so long as one is in possession of one's senses . . .

LOTH

Aha! Then you do admit that, in general, the consumption of alcohol does endanger the possession of one's senses? And for that reason, you see, I find tavern parties such a bore.

HOFFMANN

Are you afraid of losing possession of your senses so easily?

KAHL

T'-t'other d-day I drank a b-bottle o' R-Rhine-wine, *an'* another o' ch-champagne. An' on top o' that an-n-nother o' B-Bordeaux — an' I wan't drunk by half.

LOTH

[*To* HOFFMANN.] Oh no. You know well enough that it was I who took you fellows home

when you'd been taking too much. And I still have the same tough old system. No, I'm not afraid on that account.

HOFFMANN

Well, then, what is it?

HELEN

Yes, why is it really that you don't drink? Do tell us!

LOTH

[*To* HOFFMANN.] In order to satisfy you then: I do not drink to-day, if for no other reason but because I have given my word of honour to avoid spirituous liquors.

HOFFMANN

In other words, you've sunk to the level of a temperance fanatic.

LOTH

I am a total abstainer.

HOFFMANN

And for how long, may one ask, have you gone in for this —

LOTH

For life.

HOFFMANN

[*Throws down his knife and fork and half starts up from his chair.*] Well, I'll be . . . [*He sits*

down again.] Now, frankly, you must forgive me, but I never thought you so — childish.

LOTH

You may call it so if you please.

HOFFMANN

But how in the world did you get into that kind of thing?

HELEN

Surely, for such a resolution you must have a very weighty cause — it seems so to me, at least.

LOTH

Undoubtedly such a reason exists. You probably do not know, Miss Krause, nor you either, Hoffmann, what an appalling part alcohol plays in modern life . . . Read Bunge, if you desire to gain an idea of it. I happen to remember the statements of a writer named Everett concerning the significance of alcohol in the life of the United States. His facts cover a space of ten years. In these ten years, according to him, alcohol has devoured directly a sum of three thousand millions of dollars and indirectly of six hundred millions. It has killed three hundred thousand people, it has driven thousands of others into prisons and poor-houses; it has caused two thousand suicides at the least. It has caused the loss of at least ten millions through fire and violent destruction; it has rendered no less than twenty thousand women, widows, and no less than one million children, orphans. Worst of all, how-

ever, are the far-reaching effects of alcohol which extend to the third and fourth generation.— Now, had I pledged myself never to marry, I might perhaps drink, but as it is — My ancestors, as I happen to know, were all not only healthy and robust but thoroughly temperate people. Every movement that I make, every hardship that I undergo, every breath that I draw brings what I owe them more deeply home to me. And that, you see, is the point: I am absolutely determined to transmit undiminished to my posterity this heritage which is mine.

Mrs. Krause

Look here, son-in-law, them miners o' ours do drink a deal too much. I guess that's true.

Kahl

They swills like pigs.

Helen

And such things are hereditary?

Loth

There are families who are ruined by it — families of dipsomaniacs.

Kahl

[*Half to* Mrs. Krause; *half to* Helen.] Your old man — he's goin' it pretty fast, too.

HELEN

[*White as a sheet, vehemently.*] Oh, don't talk nonsense.

MRS. KRAUSE

Eh, but listen to the impident hussy. You might think she was a princess! You're tryin' to play bein' a grand lady, I s'ppose! That's the way she goes fer her future husband. [*To* LOTH, *pointing to* KAHL.] That's him, you know; they're promised; it's all arranged.

HELEN

[*Jumping up.*] Stop! or . . . *Stop,* mother, or I . . .

MRS. KRAUSE

Well, I do declare! Say, Doctor, is that what you call eddication, eh? God knows, I treat her as if she was my own child, but that's a little too much.

HOFFMANN

[*Soothingly.*] Ah, mother, do me the favour . .

MRS. KRAUSE

No-o! I don't see why. Such a goose like that . . . That's an end o' all justice . . . such a sl . . .!

HOFFMANN

Oh, but mother, I must really beg of you to control —

MRS. KRAUSE

[*Doubly enraged.*] Instead o' sich a crittur takin' a hand on the farm . . . God forbid! She pulls her sheets 'way over her ears. But her Schillers and her Goethes and sich like stinkin' dogs — that can't do nothin' but lie; they c'n turn her head. It's enough to make you sick!

[*She stops, quivering with rage.*

HOFFMANN

[*Trying to pacify her.*] Well, well — she will be all right now . . . perhaps it wasn't quite right . . . perhaps . . .

[*He beckons to* HELEN, *who in her excitement has drawn aside, and the girl, fighting down her tears, returns to her place.*

HOFFMANN

[*Interrupting the painful silence that has followed, to* LOTH.] Ah, yes . . . what were we talking about? To be sure, of good old alcohol. [*He raises his glass.*] Well, mother, let us have peace. Come, we'll drink a toast in peace, and honour alcohol by being peaceful. [MRS. KRAUSE, *although somewhat rebelliously, clinks glasses with him.*] What, Helen, and your glass is empty . . . I say, Loth, you've made a proselyte.

HELEN

Ah . . . no . . . I . . .

MRS. SPILLER

But, dear Miss Helen, that looks sus —

HOFFMANN

You weren't always so very particular.

HELEN

[*Pertly.*] I simply have no inclination to drink to-day. That's all.

HOFFMANN

Oh, I *beg* your pardon, very humbly indeed . . . Let me see, what were we talking about?

LOTH

We were saying that there were whole families of dipsomaniacs.

HOFFMANN

[*Embarrassed anew.*] To be sure, to be sure, but . . . er . . .

[Growing anger is noticeable in the behaviour of MRS. KRAUSE. KAHL *is obviously hard put to it to restrain his laughter concerning something that seems to furnish him immense inner amusement.* HELEN *observes* KAHL *with burning eyes and her threatening glance has repeatedly restrained him from saying something that is clearly on the tip of his tongue.* LOTH, *peeling an apple with a good deal of equanimity, has taken no notice of all this.*

LOTH

What is more, you seem to be rather blessed with that sort of thing hereabouts.

HOFFMANN

[*Almost beside himself.*] Why? How? Blessed with what?

LOTH

With drunkards, of course.

HOFFMANN

H-m! Do you think so . . . ah . . . yes . . . I dare say — the miners . . .

LOTH

Not only the miners. Here, in the inn, where I stopped before I came to you, there sat a fellow, for instance, this way.

[*He rests both elbows on the table, supports his head with his hands and stares at the table.*

HOFFMANN

Really?

[*His embarrassment has now reached its highest point;* MRS. KRAUSE *coughs;* HELEN *still commands* KAHL *with her eyes. His whole body quivers with internal laughter, but he is still capable of enough self-command not to burst out.*

LOTH

I'm surprised that you don't know this, well, one might almost say, this matchless example of his kind. It's the inn next door to your house. I was told that the man is an immensely rich farmer of this place who literally spends his days and years in the same tap-room drinking whiskey. Of course he's a mere animal to-day. Those frightfully vacant, drink-bleared eyes with which he stared at me!

[KAHL, *who has restrained himself up to this point, breaks out in coarse, loud, irrepressible laughter, so that* LOTH *and* HOFFMANN, *dumb with astonishment, stare at him.*

KAHL

[*Stammering out through his laughter.*] By the Almighty, that was . . . Oh, sure, sure — that was the ol' man.

HELEN

[*Jumps up, horrified and indignant. She crushes her napkin and flings it on the table.*] You are . . . [*With a gesture of utter loathing.*] Oh, you are . . . [*She withdraws swiftly.*

KAHL

[*Violently breaking through the constraint which arises from his consciousness of having committed a gross blunder.*] Oh, pshaw! . . . It's too dam' foolish! I'm goin' my own ways. [*He puts on his hat and says, without turning back:*] Even-in'.

Mrs. Krause

[*Calls out after him.*] Don' know's I c'n blame you, William. [*She folds her napkin and calls:*] Miele! [Miele *enters.*] Clear the table! [*To herself, but audibly.*] Sich a goose!

Hoffmann

[*Somewhat angry.*] Well, mother, honestly, I must say . . .

Mrs. Krause

You go and . . .! [*Arises; exits quickly.*

Mrs. Spiller

Madame — m — has had a good many domestic annoyances to-day — m —. I will now respectfully take my leave.

[*She rises, prays silently with upturned eyes for a moment and then leaves.*

Miele *and* Edward *clear the table.* Hoffmann *has arisen and comes to the foreground. He has a toothpick in his mouth.* Loth *follows him.*

Hoffmann

Well, you see, that's the way women are.

Loth

I can't say that I understand what it was about.

Hoffmann

It isn't worth mentioning. Things like that happen in the most refined families. It mustn't keep you from spending a few days with us . . .

LOTH

I should like to have made your wife's acquaintance. Why doesn't she appear at all?

HOFFMANN

[*Cutting off the end of a fresh cigar.*] Well, in her condition, you understand . . . women won't abandon their vanity. Come, let's go and take a few turns in the garden.— Edward, serve coffee in the arbour!

EDWARD

Very well, sir.

[HOFFMANN *and* LOTH *disappear by way of the conservatory.* EDWARD *leaves by way of the middle door and* MIELE, *immediately thereafter, goes out, carrying a tray of dishes, by the same door. For a few seconds the room is empty. Then enters*

HELEN

[*Wrought up, with tear-stained eyes, holding her handkerchief against her mouth. From the middle door, by which she has entered, she takes a few hasty steps to the left and listens at the door of* HOFFMANN'S *room.*] Oh, don't go! [*Hearing nothing there, she hastens over to the door of the conservatory, where she also listens for a few moments with tense expression. Folding her hands and in a tone of impassioned beseeching.*] Oh, don't go! Don't go!

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE SECOND ACT

It is about four o'clock in the morning. The windows in the inn are still lit. Through the gateway comes in the twilight of a pallid dawn which, in the course of the action, develops into a ruddy glow, and this, in its turn, gradually melts into bright daylight. Under the gateway, on the ground, sits Beipst *and sharpens his scythe. As the curtain rises, little more is visible than his dark outline which is defined against the morning sky, but one hears the monotonous, uninterrupted and regular beat of the scythe hammer on the anvil. For some minutes this is the only sound audible. Then follows the solemn silence of the morning, broken by the cries of roysterers who are leaving the inn. The inn-door is slammed with a crash. The lights in the windows go out. A distant barking of dogs is heard and a loud, confused crowing of cocks. On the path from the inn to the house a dark figure becomes visible which reels in zigzag lines toward the farmyard. It is* Farmer Krause, *who, as always, has been the last to leave the inn.*

Farmer Krause

[*Has reeled against the fence, clings to it for support with both hands, and roars with a some-*

what nasal, drunken voice back at the inn.] The garden 'sh mine . . . the inn 'sh mi-ine . . . ash of a' inn-keeper! Hi-hee! [*After mumbling and growling unintelligibly he frees himself from the fence and staggers into the yard, where, luckily, he gets hold of the handles of a plough.*] The farm 'sh mi'ine. [*He drivels, half singing.*] Drink . . . o . . . lil' brother, drink . . . o . . . lil' brother . . . brandy 'sh good t' give courash. Hi-hee — [*roaring aloud*] — ain' I a han'some man . . . Ain' I got a han'some wife? . . . *Ain'* I got a couple o' han'some gals?

Helen

[*Comes swiftly from the house. It is plain that she has only slipped on such garments as, in her hurry, she could find.*] Papa! . . . dear papa!! Do come in! [*She supports him by one arm, tries to lead him and draw him toward the house.*] Oh, do come . . . do *please* come . . . quick . . . quick . . . Come, oh, do, *do* come!

Farmer Krause

[*Has straightened himself up and tries to stand erect. Fumbling with both hands he succeeds, with great pains, in extracting from his breeches-pocket a purse bursting with coins. As the morning brightens, it is possible to see the shabby garb of* Krause, *which is in no respects better than that of the commonest field labourer. He is about fifty years old. His head is bare, his thin, grey hair is uncombed and matted. His dirty shirt is open down to his waist. His leathern breeches, tied at the ankles, were once yellow but are now*

shiny with dirt. They are held up by a single embroidered suspender. On his naked feet he wears a pair of embroidered bedroom slippers, the embroidery on which seems to be quite new. He wears neither coat nor waist-coat and his shirt-sleeves are unbuttoned. After he has finally succeeded in extracting the purse, he holds it in his right hand and brings it down repeatedly on the palm of his left so that the coins ring and clatter. At the same time he fixes a lascivious look on his daughter.] Hi-hee! The money 'sh mi-ine! Hey? How'd y' like couple o' crownsh?

HELEN

Oh, merciful God! [*She makes repeated efforts to drag him with her. At one of these efforts he embraces her with the clumsiness of a gorilla and makes several indecent gestures.* HELEN *utters suppressed cries for help.*] Let go! This minute! Let go—o!! Oh, please, papa, Oh-o!! [*She weeps, then suddenly cries out in an extremity of fear, loathing and rage:*] Beast! Swine!

[*She pushes him from her and* KRAUSE *falls to his full length on the ground.* BEIPST *comes limping up from his seat under the gateway. He and* HELEN *set about lifting* KRAUSE.

FARMER KRAUSE

[*Stammers.*] Drink . . . o . . . lil' brothersh . . . drrr . . .

[KRAUSE *is half-lifted up and tumbles into the house, dragging* BEIPST *and* HELEN *with him. For a moment the stage re-*

mains empty. In the house voices are heard and the slamming of doors. A single window is lit, upon which Beipst *comes out of the house again. He strikes a match against his leathern breeches in order to light the short pipe that rarely leaves his mouth. While he is thus employed,* Kahl *is seen slinking out of the house. He is in his stocking feet, but has slung his coat loosely over his left arm and holds his bedroom slippers in his left hand. In his right hand he holds his hat and his collar in his teeth. When he has reached the middle of the yard, he sees the face of* Beipst *turned upon him. For a moment he seems undecided; then he manages to grasp his hat and collar also with his left hand, dives into his breeches' pocket and going up to* Beipst *presses a coin into the latter's hand.*

Kahl

There, you got a crown . . . but shut yer mouth!

[*He hastens across the yard and climbs over the picket fence at the right.*

[Beipst *has lit his pipe with a fresh match. He limps to the gate, sits down and begins sharpening his scythe anew. Again nothing is heard for a time but the monotonous hammer blows and the groans of the old man, which he interrupts by short oaths when his work will not go to his liking. It has grown considerably lighter.*

LOTH

[*Steps out of the house door, stands still, stretches himself, and breathes deeply several times.*] Ah! The morning air. [*Slowly he goes toward the background until he reaches the gateway. To* BEIPST.] Good morning! Up so early?

BEIPST

[*Squinting at* LOTH *suspiciously. In a surly tone.*] 'Mornin'. [*A brief pause, whereupon* BEIPST *addresses his scythe which he pulls to and fro in his indignation.*] Crooked beast! Well, are ye goin' to? Eksch! Well, well, I'll be . . .

[*He continues to sharpen it.*

LOTH

[*Has taken a seat between the handles of a cultivator.*] I suppose there's hay harvesting to-day?

BEIPST

[*Roughly.*] Dam' fools go a-cuttin' hay this time o' year.

LOTH

Well, but you're sharpening a scythe?

BEIPST

[*To the scythe.*] Eksch! You ol' . . .!

[*A brief pause.*]

LOTH

Won't you tell me, though, why you are sharpening your scythe if it is not time for the hay harvest?

Beipst

Eh? Don't you need a scythe to cut fodder?

Loth

So that's it. You're going to cut fodder?

Beipst

Well, what else?

Loth

And is it cut every morning?

Beipst

Well, d' you want the beasts to starve?

Loth

You must show me a little forbearance. You see, I'm a city man; and it isn't possible for me to know things about farming very exactly.

Beipst

City folks! Eksh! All of 'em I ever saw thought they knew it all — better'n country folks.

Loth

That isn't the case with me.— Can you explain to me, for instance, what kind of an implement this is? I have seen one like it before, to be sure, but the name —

BEIPST

That thing that ye're sittin' on? Why, they calls that a cultivator.

LOTH

To be sure — a cultivator. Is it used here?

BEIPST

Naw; more's the pity. He lets everything go to hell . . . all the land . . . lets it go, the farmer does. A poor man would like to have a bit o' land — you can't have grain growin' in your beard, you know. But no! He'd rather let it go to the devil! Nothin' grows excep' weeds an' thistles.

LOTH

Well, but you can get those out with the cultivator, too. I know that the Icarians had them, too, in order to weed thoroughly the land that had been cleared.

BEIPST

Where's them I-ca . . . what d'you call 'em?

LOTH

The Icarians? In America.

BEIPST

They've got things like that there, too?

LOTH

Certainly.

BEIPST

What kind of people is them I—I-ca . . .?

LOTH

The Icarians? They are not a special people at all, but men of all nations who have united for a common purpose. They own a considerable tract of land in America which they cultivate together. They share both the work and the profits equally. None of them is poor and there are no poor people among them.

BEIPST

[*Whose expression had become a little more friendly, assumes, during* LOTH's *last speech, his former hostile and suspicious look. Without taking further notice of* LOTH *he has, during the last few moments, given his exclusive attention to his work.*] Beast of a scythe!

[LOTH, *still seated, first observes the old man with a quiet smile and then looks out into the awakening morning.*

Through the gateway are visible far stretches of clover field and meadow. Between them meanders a brook whose course is marked by alders and willows. A single mountain peak towers on the horizon. All about, larks have begun their song, and their uninterrupted trilling floats, now from near, now from far, into the farm yard.

Loth

[*Getting up.*] One ought to take a walk. The morning is magnificent.

[*The clatter of wooden shoes is heard. Some one is rapidly coming down the stairs that lead from the stable loft. It is* Guste.

Guste

[*A rather stout maid-servant. Her neck is bare, as are her arms and legs below the knee. Her naked feet are stuck in wooden shoes. She carries a burning lantern.*] Good mornin', father Beipst!

[Beipst *growls.*]

Guste

[*Shading her eyes with her hand looks after* Loth *through the gate.*] What kind of a feller is that?

Beipst

[*Embittered.*] He can make fools o' beggars . . . He can lie like a parson . . . Jus' let him tell you his stories. [*He gets up.*] Get the wheelbarrows ready, girl!

Guste

[*Who has been washing her legs at the well gets through before disappearing into the cow stable.*] Right away, father Beipst.

LOTH

[*Returns and gives* BEIPST *a tip.*] There's something for you. A man can always use that.

BEIPST

[*Thawing at once, quite changed and with sincere companionableness.*] Yes, yes, you're right there, and I thank ye kindly.— I suppose you're the company of the son-in-law over there? [*Suddenly very voluble.*] You know, if you want to go walkin' out there, you know, toward the hill, then you want to keep to the left, real close to the left, because to the right, there's clefts. My son, he used to say, the reason of it was, he used to say, was because they didn't board the place up right, the miners didn't. They gets too little pay, he used to say, and then folks does things just hit or miss, in the shafts you know.— You see? Over yonder? Always to the left! There's holes on t'other side. It wasn't but only last year and a butter woman, just as she was, sudden, sunk down in the earth, I don't know how many fathoms down. Nobody knew whereto. So I'm tellin' you — go to the left, to the left and you'll be safe.

[*A shot is heard.* BEIPST *starts up as though he had been struck and limps out a few paces into the open.*

LOTH

Who, do you think, is shooting so early?

BEIPST

Who would it be excep' that rascal of a boy?

LOTH

What boy?

BEIPST

Will Kahl — our neighbour's son here . . . You just wait, you! I've seen him, I tell you. He shoots larks.

LOTH

Why, you limp!

BEIPST

Yes, the Lord pity me. [*He shakes a threatening fist toward the fields.*] Eh, wait, you . . . you . . .!

LOTH

What happened to your leg?

BEIPST

My leg?

LOTH

Yes.

BEIPST

Eh? Somethin' got into it.

LOTH

Do you suffer pain?

BEIPST

[*Grasping his leg.*] There's a tugging pain in it, a confounded pain.

LOTH

Do you see a doctor about it?

BEIPST

Doctors? Eh, you know, they're all monkeys — one like another. Only our doctor here — he's a mighty good man.

LOTH

And did he help you?

BEIPST

A little, maybe, when all's said. He kneaded my leg, you see, he squeezed it, an' he punched it. But no, 't'ain't on that account. He is . . . well, I tell you, he's got compassion on a human bein', that's it. He buys the medicine an' asks nothin'. An' he'll come to you any time . . .

LOTH

Still, you must have come by that trouble somehow. Or did you always limp?

BEIPST

Not a bit of it!

LOTH

Then I don't think I quite understand. There must have been some cause . . .

BEIPST

How do I know? [*Once more he raises a menacing fist.*] You jus' wait, you — with your rattling!

KAHL

[*Appears within his own garden. In his right hand he carries a rifle by the barrel, his left hand is closed. He calls across.*] Good mornin', Doctor!

LOTH *walks diagonally across the yard up to* KAHL. *In the meantime* GUSTE *as well as another maid-servant named* LIESE *have each made ready a wheel-barrow on which lie rakes and pitch-forks. They trundle their wheel-barrows past* BEIPST *out into the fields. The latter, sending menacing glances toward* KAHL *and making furtive gestures of rage, shoulders his scythe and limps after them.* BEIPST *and the maids disappear.*

LOTH

[*To* KAHL.] Good morning.

KAHL

D'you want for to see somethin' fine?

[*He stretches his closed hand across the fence.*

LOTH

[*Going nearer.*] What have you there?

KAHL

Guess! [*He opens his hand at once.*

LOTH

What? Is it really true — you shoot the larks. You good for nothing! Do you know that you deserve to be beaten for such mischief?

KAHL

[*Stares at* LOTH *for some seconds in stupid amazement. Then, clenching his fist furtively he says:*] You son of a . . .!

[*And swinging around, disappears toward the right.*

[*For some moments the yard remains empty.*]

HELEN *steps from the house door. She wears a light-coloured summer dress and a large garden hat. She looks all around her, walks a few paces toward the gate-way, stands still and gazes out. Hereupon she saunters across the yard toward the right and turns into the path that leads to the inn. Great bundles of various tea-herbs are slung across the fence to dry. She stops to inhale their odours. She also bends downward the lower boughs of fruit trees and admires the low hanging, red-cheeked apples. When she observes* LOTH *coming toward her from the inn, a yet greater restlessness comes over her, so that she finally turns around and reaches the farm yard before* LOTH. *Here she notices that the dove-cote is still closed and goes thither through the little gate that leads into the orchard. While she is still busy pulling down the cord which, blown about by the wind, has become entangled somewhere, she is addressed by* LOTH, *who has come up in the meantime.*

LOTH

Good morning, Miss Krause.

HELEN

Good morning. See, the wind has blown the cord up there!

LOTH

Let me help you.

[*He also passes through the little gate, gets the cord down and opens the dove-cote. The pigeons flutter out.*

HELEN

Thank you so much!

LOTH

[*Has passed out by the little gate once more and stands there, leaning against the fence.* HELEN *is on the other side of it. After a brief pause.*] Do you make a habit of rising so early?

HELEN

I was just going to ask you the same thing.

LOTH

I? Oh, no! But after the first night in a strange place it usually happens so.

HELEN

Why does that happen?

LOTH

I have never thought about it. To what end?

Helen

Oh, wouldn't it serve some end?

Loth

None, at least, that is apparent and practical.

Helen

And so everything that you do or think must have some practical end in view.

Loth

Exactly. Furthermore . . .

Helen

I would not have thought that of you.

Loth

What, Miss Krause?

Helen

It was with those very words that, day before yesterday, my stepmother snatched " The Sorrows of Werther " from my hand.

Loth

It is a foolish book.

Helen

Oh, don't say that.

Loth

Indeed, I must repeat it, Miss Krause. It is a book for weaklings.

HELEN

That may well be.

LOTH

How do you come across just that book? Do you quite understand it?

HELEN

I hope I do — at least, in part. It rests me to read it. [*After a pause.*] But if it *is* a foolish book, as you say, could you recommend me a better one?

LOTH

Read . . . well, let me see . . . do you know Dahn's "Fight for Rome"?

HELEN

No, but I'll buy the book now. Does it serve a practical end?

LOTH

No, but a rational one. It depicts men not as they are but such as, some day, they ought to be. Thus it sets up an ideal for our imitation.

HELEN

[*Deeply convinced.*] Ah, that is noble. [*A brief pause.*] But perhaps you can tell me something else. The papers talk so much about Zola and Ibsen. Are they great authors?

LOTH

In the sense of being artists they are not authors at all, Miss Krause. They are necessary evils. I have a genuine thirst for the beautiful and I demand of art a clear, refreshing draught. — I am not ill; and what Zola and Ibsen offer me is medicine.

HELEN

[*Quite involuntarily.*] Ah, then perhaps, they might help me.

LOTH

[*Who has become gradually absorbed in his vision of the dewy orchard and who now yields to it wholly.*] How very lovely it is here. Look, how the sun emerges from behind the mountain peak.— And you have so many apples in your garden — a rich harvest.

HELEN

Three-fourths of them will be stolen this year just as last. There is such great poverty hereabouts.

LOTH

I can scarcely tell you how deeply I love the country. Alas, the greater part of *my* harvest must be sought in cities. But I must try to enjoy this country holiday thoroughly. A man like myself needs a bit of sunshine and refreshment more than most people.

HELEN

[*Sighing.*] More than others . . . In what respect?

LOTH

It is because I am in the midst of a hard conflict, the end of which I will not live to see.

HELEN

But are we not all engaged in such a conflict?

LOTH

No.

HELEN

Surely we are all engaged in some conflict?

LOTH

Naturally, but in one that may end.

HELEN

It *may*. You are right. But why cannot the other end — I mean the one in which you are engaged, Mr. Loth?

LOTH

Your conflict, after all, can only be one for your personal happiness. And, so far as is humanly speaking possible, the individual can attain this. My struggle is a struggle for the happiness of all men. The condition of my happiness would be the happiness of all; nothing could content me until I saw an end of sickness and poverty, of

servitude and spiritual meanness. I could take my place at the banquet table of life only as the last of its guests.

HELEN

[*With deep conviction.*] Ah, then you are a truly, truly good man!

LOTH

[*Somewhat embarrassed.*] There is no merit in my attitude: it is an inborn one. And I must also confess that my struggle in the interest of progress affords me the highest satisfaction. And the kind of happiness I thus win is one that I estimate far more highly than the happiness which contents the ordinary self-seeker.

HELEN

Still there are very few people in whom such a taste is inborn.

LOTH

Perhaps it isn't wholly inborn. I think that we are constrained to it by the essential wrongness of the conditions of life. Of course, one must have a sense for that wrongness. There is the point. Now if one has that sense and suffers consciously under the wrongness of the conditions in question — why, then one becomes, necessarily, just what I am.

HELEN

Oh, if it were only clearer to me . . . Tell me, what conditions, for instance, do you call wrong?

LOTH

Well, it is wrong, for instance, that he who toils in the sweat of his brow suffers want while the sluggard lives in luxury. It is wrong to punish murder in times of peace and reward it in times of war. It is wrong to despise the hangman and yet, as soldiers do, to bear proudly at one's side a murderous weapon whether it be rapier or sabre. If the hangman displayed his axe thus he would doubtless be stoned. It is wrong, finally, to support as a state religion the faith of Christ which teaches long-suffering, forgiveness and love, and, on the other hand, to train whole nations to be destroyers of their own kind. These are but a few among millions of absurdities. It costs an effort to penetrate to the true nature of all these things: one must begin early.

HELEN

But how did you succeed in thinking of all this? It seems so simple and yet one never thinks of it.

LOTH

In various ways: the course of my own personal development, conversation with friends, reading and independent thinking. I found out the first absurdity when I was a little boy. I once told a rather flagrant lie and my father flogged me most soundly. Shortly thereafter I took a railroad journey with my father and I discovered that my father lied, too, and seemed to take the action quite as a matter of course. I was five years old at that time and my father told the conductor that I was not yet four in order to secure free trans-

portation for me. Again, our teacher said to us: be industrious, be honourable and you will invariably prosper in life. But the man had uttered folly, and I discovered that soon enough. My father was honourable, honest, and thoroughly upright, and yet a scoundrel who is alive and rich to-day cheated him of his last few thousands. And my father, driven by want, had to take employment under this very scoundrel who owned a large soap factory.

HELEN

People like myself hardly dare think of such a thing as wrong. At most one feels it to be so in silence. Indeed, one feels it often — and then — a kind of despair takes hold of one.

LOTH

I recall one absurdity which presented itself to me as such with especial clearness. I had always believed that murder is punished as a crime under whatever circumstances. After the incident in question, however, it grew to be clear to me that only the milder forms of murder are unlawful.

HELEN

How is that possible?

LOTH

My father was a boilermaster. We lived hard by the factory and our windows gave on the factory yard. I saw a good many things there. There was a workingman, for instance, who had

worked in the factory for five years. He began to have a violent cough and to lose flesh . . . I recall how my father told us about the man at table. His name was Burmeister and he was threatened with pulmonary consumption if he worked much longer in the soap factory. The doctor had told him so. But the man had eight children and, weak and emaciated as he was, he couldn't find other work anywhere. And so he *had* to stay in the soap factory and his employer was quite self-righteous because he kept him. He seemed to himself an extraordinarily humane person.— One August afternoon — the heat was frightful — Burmeister dragged himself across the yard with a wheelbarrow full of lime. I was just looking out of the window when I noticed him stop, stop again, and finally pitch over headlong on the cobblestones. I ran up to him — my father came, other workingmen came up, but he could barely gasp and his mouth was filled with blood. I helped carry him into the house. He was a mass of limy rags, reeking with all kinds of chemicals. Before we had gotten him into the house, he was dead.

Helen

Ah, that is terrible.

Loth

Scarcely a week later we pulled his wife out of the river into which the waste lye of our factory was drained. And, my dear young lady, when one knows things of that kind as I know them now — believe me — one can find no rest. A simple little piece of soap, which makes no one else in the

world think of any harm, even a pair of clean, well-cared-for hands are enough to embitter one thoroughly.

HELEN

I saw something like that once. And oh, it was frightful, frightful!

LOTH

What was that?

HELEN

The son of a workingman was carried in here half-dead. It's about — three years ago.

LOTH

Had he been injured?

HELEN

Yes, over there in the Bear shaft.

LOTH

So it was a miner?

HELEN

Oh, yes. Most of the young men around here go to work in the mines. Another son of the same man was also a trammer and also met with an accident.

LOTH

And were they both killed?

HELEN

Yes, both . . . Once the lift broke; the other time it was fire damp.— Old Beipst has yet a third son and he has gone down to the mine too since last Easter.

LOTH

Is it possible? And doesn't the father object?

HELEN

No, not at all. Only he is even more morose than he used to be. Haven't you seen him yet?

LOTH

How could I?

HELEN

Why, he sat near here this morning, under the gateway.

LOTH

Oh! So he works on the farm here?

HELEN

He has been with us for years.

LOTH

Does he limp?

HELEN

Yes, quite badly, indeed.

LOTH

Ah — ha! And what was it that happened to his leg?

HELEN

That's a delicate subject. You have met Mr. Kahl? . . . But I must tell you this story very softly. [*She draws nearer to* LOTH.] His father, you know, was just as silly about hunting as he is. When wandering apprentices came into his yard he shot at them — sometimes only into the air in order to frighten them. He had a violent temper too, and especially when he had been drinking. Well, I suppose Beipst grumbled one day — he likes to grumble, you know — and so the farmer snatched up his rifle and fired at him. Beipst, you know, used to be coachman at the Kahls.

LOTH

Outrage and iniquity wherever one goes.

HELEN

[*Growing more uncertain and excited in her speech.*] Oh, I've had my own thoughts often and often . . . and I've felt so sick with pity for them all, for old Beipst and . . . When the farmers are so coarse and brutish like — well, like Streckmann, who — lets his farm hands starve and feeds sweetmeats to the dogs. I've often felt confused in my mind since I came home from boarding-school . . . I have my burden too! — But I'm talking nonsense. It can't possibly interest you, and you will only laugh at me to yourself.

LOTH

But, my dear Miss Krause, how can you think that? Why should I?

HELEN

How can you help it? You'll think anyhow: she's no better than the rest here!

LOTH

I think ill of no one.

HELEN

Oh, you can't make me believe that — ever!

LOTH

But what occasion have I given you to make you . . .

HELEN

[*Almost in tears.*] Oh, don't talk. You despise us; you may be sure that you do. Why, how can you help despising us — [*tearfully*] — even my brother-in-law, even me. Indeed, me above all, and you have — oh, you have truly good reasons for it!

[*She quickly turns her back to* LOTH, *no longer able to master her emotion, and disappears through the orchard into the background.* LOTH *passes through the little gate and follows her slowly.*

Mrs. Krause

[*In morning costume, ridiculously over-dressed, comes out of the house. Her face is crimson with rage. She screams.*] The low-lived hussy! Marie! Ma—rie!! Under my roof! Out with the brazen hussy!

[*She runs across the yard and disappears in the stable.* Mrs. Spiller *appears in the house-door; she is crocheting. From within the stable resound scolding and howling.*

Mrs. Krause

[*Comes out of the stable driving the howling maid before her.*] Slut of a wench! — [*The maid almost screams.*] — Git out o' here this minute! Pack yer things 'n then git out!

The Maid

[*Catching sight of* Mrs. Spiller, *hurls her milking stool and pail from her.*] That's your doin'! I'll git even with you!

[*Sobbing, she runs up the stairs to the loft.*

Helen

[*Joining* Mrs. Krause.] Why, what did she do?

Mrs. Krause

[*Roughly.*] Any o' your business?

Helen

[*Passionately, almost weeping.*] Yes, it is my business.

Mrs. Spiller

[*Coming up quickly.*] Dear Miss Helen, it's nothing fit for the ear of a young lady . . .

Mrs. Krause

An' I'd like to know why not! She ain't made o' sugar. The wench lay abed with the hired man. Now you know it!

Helen

[*In a commanding voice.*] The maid shall stay for all that!

Mrs. Krause

Wench!

Helen

Good! Then I'll tell father that you spend your nights just the same way with William Kahl.

Mrs. Krause

[*Strikes her full in the face.*] There you got a reminder!

Helen

[*Deathly pale, but even more firmly.*] And I say the maid shall stay! Otherwise I'll make it known — you . . . with William Kahl . . . your cousin, my betrothed . . . I'll tell the whole world.

Mrs. Krause

[*Her assurance breaking down.*] Who can say it's so!

HELEN

I can. For I saw him this morning coming out of your bed-room . . .

[*She goes swiftly into the house.*

[MRS. KRAUSE *totters, almost fainting.* MRS. SPILLER *hurries to her with smelling-salts.*

MRS. SPILLER

Oh, Madame, Madame!

MRS. KRAUSE

Sp—illér; the maid c'n ss-stay!

THE CURTAIN FALLS QUICKLY

THE THIRD ACT

Time: a few minutes after the incident between HELEN *and her step-mother in the yard. The scene is that of the first act.*

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG *sits at the table in the foreground to the left. He is writing a prescription. His slouch hat, cotton gloves and cane lie on the table before him. He is short and thick-set of figure; his hair is black and clings in small, firm curls to his head; his moustache is rather heavy. He wears a black coat after the pattern of the Jaeger reform garments. He has the habit of stroking or pulling his moustache almost uninterruptedly; the more excited he is, the more violent is this gesture. When he speaks to* HOFFMANN *his expression is one of enforced equanimity, but a touch of sarcasm hovers about the corners of his mouth. His gestures, which are thoroughly natural, are lively, decisive and angular.* HOFFMANN *walks up and down, dressed in a silk dressing-gown and slippers. The table in the background to the right is laid for breakfast: costly porcelain, dainty rolls, a decanter with rum, etc.*

HOFFMANN

Are you satisfied with my wife's appearance, doctor?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

She's looking well enough. Why not?

Hoffmann

And do you think that everything will pass favourably?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

I hope so.

Hoffmann

[*After a pause, with hesitation.*] Doctor, I made up my mind — weeks ago — to ask your advice in a very definite matter as soon as I came here.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

[*Who has hitherto talked and written at the same time, lays his pen aside, arises, and hands* Hoffmann *the finished prescription.*] Here . . . I suppose you'll have that filled quite soon. [*Taking up his hat, cane and gloves.*] Your wife complains of headaches, and so — [*looking into his hat and adopting a dry, business-like tone*] — and so, before I forget: try, if possible, to make it clear to your wife that she is in a measure responsible for the new life that is to come into the world. I have already said something to her of the consequences of tight lacing.

Hoffmann

Certainly, doctor . . . I'll do my very best to make it clear to her that . . .

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

[*Bowing somewhat awkwardly.*] Good morning. [*He is about to go but stops again.*] Ah, yes, you wanted my advice . . .

[*He regards* HOFFMANN *coldly.*

HOFFMANN

If you can spare me a little while . . . [*With a touch of affectation.*] You know about the frightful death of my first boy. You were near enough to watch it. You know also what my state of mind was.— One doesn't believe it at first, but — time does heal! . . . And, after all, I have cause to be grateful now, since it seems that my dearest wish is about to be fulfilled. You understand that I must do everything, everything — it has cost me sleepless nights and yet I don't know yet, not even yet, just what I must do to guard the unborn child from the terrible fate of its little brother. And that is what I wanted to ask . . .

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

[*Dryly and business-like.*] Separation from the mother is the indispensable condition of a healthy development.

HOFFMANN

So it *is* that! Do you mean complete separation? . . . Is the child not even to be in the same house with its mother?

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

Not if you are seriously concerned for the preservation of your child. And your wealth permits

you the greatest freedom of movement in this respect.

HOFFMANN

Yes, thank God. I have already bought a villa with a very large park in the neighbourhood of Hirschberg. Only I thought that my wife too . . .

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

[*Pulls at his moustache and stares at the floor. Thoughtfully.*] Why don't you buy a villa somewhere else for your wife?

[HOFFMANN *shrugs his shoulders.*

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

[*As before.*] Could you not, perhaps, engage the interest of your sister-in-law for the task of bringing up this child?

HOFFMANN

If you knew, doctor, how many obstacles . . . and, after all, she is a young, inexperienced girl, and a mother *is* a mother.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

You have my opinion. Good morning.

HOFFMANN

[*Overwhelming the doctor with excessive courtesy.*] *Good* morning. I am extremely grateful to you . . .

[*Both withdraw through the middle door.*

Helen *enters. Her handkerchief is pressed to her mouth; she is sobbing, beside herself, and lets herself fall on the sofa in the foreground to the left. After a few moments,* Hoffmann *reënters, his hands full of newspapers.*

Hoffmann

Why, what is that? Tell me, sister, are things to go on this way much longer? Since I came here not a day has passed on which I haven't seen you cry.

Helen

Oh! — what do *you* know? If you had any sense for such things you'd be surprised that you ever saw me when I didn't cry!

Hoffmann

That isn't clear to me.

Helen

Oh, but it is to me!

Hoffmann

Look here, something must have happened!

Helen

[*Jumps up and stamps her foot.*] Ugh . . . but I won't bear it any longer . . . it's got to stop! I won't endure such things any more! I don't see why . . . I . . . [*Her sobs choke her.*

HOFFMANN

Won't you tell me at least what the trouble is, so that I . . .

HELEN

[*Bursting out with renewed passion.*] I don't care what happens to me! Nothing worse *could.* I've got a drunkard for a father, a beast — with whom his . . . his own daughter isn't safe.— An adulterous step-mother who wants to turn me over to her lover . . . And this whole life.— No, I don't see that anyone can force me to be bad in spite of myself. I'm going away! I'll run away! And if the people here won't let me go, then . . . rope, knife, gun . . . I don't care! I don't want to take to drinking brandy like my sister.

HOFFMANN

[*Frightened, grasps her arm.*] Nellie, keep still, I tell you; keep still about that.

HELEN

I don't care; I don't care one bit! I . . . I'm ashamed of it all to the very bottom of my soul. I wanted to learn something, to be something, to have a chance — and what am I now?

HOFFMANN

[*Who has not released her arm, begins gradually to draw the girl over toward the sofa. The tone of his voice now takes on an excessive softness, an exaggerated, vibrant gentleness.*] Nellie! Ah, I know right well that you have many things to

suffer here. But be calm . . .! You need not tell one who knows. [*He puts his right hand caressingly upon her shoulder and brings his face close to hers.*] I can't bear to see you weep. Believe me — it hurts me. But don't, don't see things in a worse light than is needful —; and then: have you forgotten, that we are both — you and I — so to speak — in the same position? — I have gotten into this peasant atmosphere — do I fit into it? As little as you do yourself, surely.

HELEN

If my — dear little mother had suspected this — when she . . . when she directed — that I should be — educated at Herrnhut! If she had rather . . . rather left me at home, then at least . . . at least I wouldn't have known anything else, and I would have grown up in this corruption. But now . . .

HOFFMANN

[*Has gently forced* HELEN *down upon the sofa and now sits, pressed close, beside her. In his consolations the sensual element betrays itself more and more strongly.*] Nellie! Look at me; let those things be. Let me be your consolation. I needn't talk to you about your sister. [*He embraces her more firmly. Passionately and feelingly.*] Oh, if she were what you are! . . . But as it is . . . tell me: what can she be to me? Did you ever hear of a man, Nellie, of a cultured man whose wife — [*he almost whispers*] — is a prey to such an unhappy passion? One is afraid to utter it aloud: a woman — and — brandy . . . Now, do

you think I am any happier? . . . Think of my little Freddie! Well, am I, when all's said, any better off than you are? . . . [*With increasing passion.*] And so, you see, fate has done us one kindness anyhow. It has brought us together. And we belong together. Our equal sorrows have predestined us to be friends. Isn't it so, Nellie?

[*He puts his arms wholly around her. She permits it but with an expression which shows that she forces herself to mere endurance. She has grown quite silent and seems, with quivering tension of soul, to be awaiting some certainty, some consummation that is inevitably approaching.*

HOFFMANN

[*Tenderly.*] You should consent to my plan; you should leave this house and live with us. The baby that is coming needs a mother. Come and be a mother to it; otherwise — [*passionately moved and sentimentally*] — it will have no mother. And then: bring a little, oh, only a very little brightness into my life! Do that! Oh, do that!

[*He is about to lean his head upon her breast. She jumps up, indignant. In her expression are revealed contempt, surprise, loathing and hatred.*

HELEN

Oh, but you are, you are . . . Now I know you thoroughly! Oh, I've felt it dimly before. But now I am certain.

HOFFMANN

[*Surprised, put out of countenance.*] What? Helen . . . you're unique — really.

HELEN

Now I know that you're not by one hair's breadth better . . . indeed, you're much worse — the worst of them all here!

HOFFMANN

[*Arises. With assumed coldness.*] D'you know, your behaviour to-day is really quite peculiar.

HELEN

[*Approaches him.*] You have just one end in view. [*Almost whispering.*] But you have very different weapons from father and from my step-mother or from my excellent betrothed — oh, quite different. They are all lambs, all of them, compared to you. Now, now, suddenly, that has become clear as day to me.

HOFFMANN

[*With hypocritical indignation.*] Helen, you seem really not to be in your right mind; you're suffering under a delusion . . . [*He interrupts himself and strikes his forehead.*] Good Lord, of course! I see it all. You have . . . it's very early in the day, to be sure, but I'd wager . . . Helen! Have you been talking to Alfred Loth this morning?

HELEN

And why should I not have been talking to him? He is the kind of man before whom we should all be hiding in shame if things went by rights.

HOFFMANN

So I was right! . . . That's it . . . Aha . . . well, to be sure . . . then I have no further cause for surprise. So he actually used the opportunity to go for his benefactor a bit. Of course, one should really be prepared for things of that kind.

HELEN

Do you know, I think that is really caddish.

HOFFMANN

I'm inclined to think so myself.

HELEN

He didn't breathe one syllable, not one, about you.

HOFFMANN

[*Slurring* HELEN's *argument.*] If things have reached that pass, then it is really my duty, my duty, I say, as a relative toward an inexperienced young girl like you . . .

HELEN

Inexperienced girl! What is the use of this pretence?

HOFFMANN

[*Enraged.*] Loth came into this house on my responsibility. Now I want you to know that he is, to put it mildly, an exceedingly dangerous fanatic — this Mr. Loth.

HELEN

To hear you saying that of Mr. Loth strikes me as so absurd, so laughably absurd!

HOFFMANN

And he is a fanatic, furthermore, who has the gift of muddling the heads not only of women, but even of sensible people.

HELEN

Well, now, you see, that again strikes me as so absurd. I only exchanged a few words with Mr. Loth and ever since I feel a clearness about things that does me so much good . . .

HOFFMANN

[*In a rebukeful tone.*] What I tell you is by no means absurd!

HELEN

One has to have a sense for the absurd, and that's what you haven't.

HOFFMANN

[*In the same manner.*] That isn't what we're discussing. I assure you once more that what I tell you is not at all absurd, but something that I

must ask you to take as actually true . . . I have my own experience to guide me. Notions like that befog one's mind; one rants of universal brotherhood, of liberty and equality and, of course, transcends every convention and every moral law . . . In those old days, for the sake of this very nonsense, we were ready to walk over the bodies of our parents to gain our ends . . . Heaven knows it. And he, I tell you, would be prepared, in a given case, to do the same thing to-day.

HELEN

And how many parents, do you suppose, walk year in and out over the bodies of their children without anybody's . . .

HOFFMANN

[*Interrupting her.*] That is *nonsense!* Why, that's the end of all . . . I tell you to take care, in every . . . I tell you emphatically, in *every* respect. You won't find a trace of moral scrupulousness in that quarter.

HELEN

Oh, dear, how absurd that sounds again. I tell you, when once you begin to take notice of things like that . . . it's awfully interesting.

HOFFMANN

You may say what you please. I have warned you. Only I will tell you quite in confidence: at the time of that incident I very nearly got into the same damnable mess myself.

HELEN

But if he's such a dangerous man, why were you sincerely delighted yesterday when he . . .

HOFFMANN

Good Lord, I knew him when I was young. And how do you know that I didn't have very definite reasons for . . .

HELEN

Reasons? Of what kind?

HOFFMANN

Never mind.— Though, if he came to-day, and if I knew what I do know to-day —

HELEN

What is it that you know? I've told you already that he didn't utter one word about you.

HOFFMANN

Well, you may depend on it that if that had been the case, I would have thought it all over very carefully, and would probably have taken good care not to keep him here. Loth is now and always will be a man whose acquaintance compromises you. The authorities have an eye on him.

HELEN

Why? Has he committed a crime?

HOFFMANN

The less said about it the better. Just let this assurance be sufficient for you: to go about the world to-day, entertaining his opinions, is far worse and, above all, far more dangerous than stealing.

HELEN

I will remember.— But now — listen! After all your talk about Mr. Loth, you needn't ask me any more what I think of you.— Do you hear?

HOFFMANN

[*With cold cynicism.*] Do you suppose that I'm so greatly concerned to know that? [*He presses the electric button.*] And, anyhow, I hear him coming in.

LOTH *enters.*

HOFFMANN

Hallo! Did you sleep well, old man?

LOTH

Well, but not long. Tell me this, though: I saw a gentleman leaving the house a while ago.

HOFFMANN

Probably the doctor. He was here a while ago. I told you about him, didn't I? — this queer mixture of hardness and sentimentality.

HELEN *gives instructions to* EDWARD, *who has just entered. He leaves and returns shortly, serving tea and coffee.*

LOTH

This mixture, as you call him, happened to resemble an old friend of my student days most remarkably. In fact, I could have taken my oath that it was a certain — Schimmelpfennig.

HOFFMANN

[*Sitting down at the breakfast table.*] That's quite right — Schimmelpfennig.

LOTH

Quite right? You mean?

HOFFMANN

That his name is really Schimmelpfennig.

LOTH

Who? The doctor here?

HOFFMANN

Yes, certainly, the doctor.

LOTH

Now that is really strange enough. Then of course, it's he?

HOFFMANN

Well, you see, beautiful souls find each other on sea and shore. You'll pardon me, won't you, if I begin? We were just about to sit down to breakfast. Do take a seat yourself. You haven't had breakfast anywhere else, have you?

LOTH

No.

HOFFMANN

Very well. Then sit down. [*Remaining seated himself he draws out a chair for* LOTH, *hereupon addressing* EDWARD, *who enters with tea and coffee.*] Ah, by the way, is Mrs. Krause coming down?

EDWARD

The madame and Mrs. Spiller are taking their breakfast upstairs.

HOFFMANN

Why, that has never before . . .

HELEN

[*Pushing the dishes to rights.*] Never mind. There's a reason.

HOFFMANN

Is that so? . . . Loth, help yourself! . . . Egg? Tea?

LOTH

I wonder if I could have a glass of milk?

HOFFMANN

With all the pleasure in the world.

HELEN

Edward, tell Miele to get some fresh milk.

HOFFMANN

[*Peeling an egg.*] Milk — brrr! Horrible! [*Helping himself to salt and pepper.*] By the way, Loth, what brings you into these parts? Up to now I've forgotten to ask you.

LOTH

[*Spreading butter on a roll.*] I would like to study the local conditions.

HOFFMANN

[*Looking up sharply.*] That so? . . . What kind of conditions?

LOTH

To be precise: I want to study the condition of your miners.

HOFFMANN

Ah! In general that condition is a very excellent one, surely.

LOTH

Do you think so? — That would be a very pleasant fact. . . . Before I forget, however. You can be of some service to me in the matter. You will deserve very well of political economy, if you . . .

HOFFMANN

I? How exactly?

LOTH

Well, you have the sole agency for the local mines?

HOFFMANN

Yes; and what of it?

LOTH

It will be very easy for you, in that case, to obtain permission for me to inspect the mines. That is to say: I would like to go down into them daily for at least a month, in order that I may gain a fairly accurate notion of the management.

HOFFMANN

[*Carelessly.*] And then, I suppose, you will describe what you've seen down there?

LOTH

Yes, my work is to be primarily descriptive.

HOFFMANN

I'm awfully sorry, but I've nothing to do with that side of things. So you just want to write about the miners, eh?

LOTH

That question shows how little of an economist you are.

HOFFMANN

[*Whose vanity is stung.*] I *beg* your pardon! I hope you don't think . . . Why? I don't see why

that isn't a legitimate question? . . . And, anyhow: it wouldn't be surprising. One can't know everything.

LOTH

Oh, calm yourself. The matter stands simply thus: if I am to study the situation of the miners in this district, it is of course unavoidably necessary that I touch upon all the factors that condition their situation.

HOFFMANN

Writings of that kind are sometimes full of frightful exaggerations.

LOTH

That is a fault which I hope to guard against.

HOFFMANN

That will be very praiseworthy. [*He has several times already cast brief and searching glances at* HELEN, *who hangs with naïve devoutness upon* LOTH'S *lips. He does so again now and continues.*] I say . . . it's just simply too queer for anything how things will suddenly pop into a man's mind. I wonder how things like that are brought about in the brain?

LOTH

What is it that has occurred to you so suddenly?

HOFFMANN

It's about you.— I thought of your be— . . . No, maybe it's tactless to speak of your heart's secrets in the presence of a young lady.

HELEN

Perhaps it would be better for me to . . .

LOTH

Please stay, Miss Krause! By all means stay, at least as far as I'm concerned. I've seen for some time what he's aiming at. There's nothing in the least dangerous about it. [*To* HOFFMANN.] You're thinking of my betrothal, eh?

HOFFMANN

Since you mention it yourself, yes. I was, as a matter of fact, thinking of your betrothal to Anna Faber.

LOTH

That was broken off, naturally, when I was sent to prison.

HOFFMANN

That wasn't very nice of your . . .

LOTH

It was, at least, honest in her! The letter in which she broke with me showed her true face. Had she shown that before she would have spared herself and me, too, a great deal.

HOFFMANN

And since that time your affections haven't taken root anywhere?

LOTH

No.

HOFFMANN

Of course! I suppose you've capitulated along the whole line — forsworn marriage as well as drink, eh? Ah, well, *à chacun son goût.*

LOTH

It's not my taste that decides in this matter, but perhaps my fate. I told you once before, I believe, that I have made no renunciation in regard to marriage. What I fear is this, that I won't find a woman who is suitable for me.

HOFFMANN

That's a big order, Loth!

LOTH

I'm quite serious, though. It may be that one grows too critical as the years go on and possesses too little healthy instinct. And I consider instinct the best guarantee of a suitable choice.

HOFFMANN

[*Frivolously.*] Oh, it'll be found again some day — [*laughing*] — the necessary instinct, I mean.

LOTH

And, after all, what have I to offer a woman? I doubt more and more whether I ought to expect any woman to content herself with that small part

of my personality which does not belong to my life's work. Then, too, I'm afraid of the cares which a family brings.

HOFFMANN

Wh-at? The cares of a married man? Haven't you a head, and arms, eh?

LOTH

Obviously. But, as I've tried to tell you, my productive power belongs, for the greater part, to my life's work and will always belong to it. Hence it is no longer mine. Then, too, there would be peculiar difficulties . . .

HOFFMANN

Listen! Hasn't some one been sounding a gong?

LOTH

You consider all I've said mere phrase-making?

HOFFMANN

Honestly, it does sound a little hollow. After all, other people are not necessarily savages, even if they are married. But some men act as though they had a monopoly of all the good deeds that are to be done in the world.

LOTH

[*With some heat.*] Not at all! I'm not thinking of such a thing. If you hadn't abandoned

your life's work, your happy material situation would be of the greatest assistance . . .

HOFFMANN

[*Ironically.*] So that would be one of your demands, too?

LOTH

Demands? How? What?

HOFFMANN

I mean that, in marrying, you would have an eye on money.

LOTH

Unquestionably.

HOFFMANN

And then — if I know you at all — there's quite a list of demands still to come.

LOTH

So there is. The woman, for instance, must have physical and mental health. That's a *conditio sine qua non.*

HOFFMANN

[*Laughing.*] Better and better! I suppose then that a previous medical examination of the lady would be necessary.

LOTH

[*Quite seriously.*] You must remember that I make demands upon myself too.

HOFFMANN

[*More and more amused.*] I know, I know! I remember your going through all the literature of love once in order to determine quite conscientiously whether that which you felt at that time for a certain lady was really the tender passion. So, let's hear a few more of your demands.

LOTH

My wife, for instance, would have to practice renunciation.

HELEN

If . . . if . . . Ah, I don't know whether it's right to . . . but I merely wanted to say that women, as a rule, are accustomed to renounce.

LOTH

For heaven's sake! You understand me quite wrongly. I did not mean renunciation in the vulgar sense. I would demand renunciation only in so far, or, rather, I would simply ask my wife to resign voluntarily and gladly that part of myself which belongs to my chosen work. No, no, in regard to every thing else, it is my wife who is to make demands — to demand all that her sex has forfeited in the course of thousands of years.

HOFFMANN

Oho, oho! Emancipation of woman! Really, that sudden turn was admirable — now you are in the right channel. Fred Loth, or the agitator in a vest-pocket edition. How would you formulate

your demands in this respect, or rather: to what degree would your wife have to be emancipated? — It really amuses me to hear you talk! Would she have to smoke cigars? Wear breeches?

LOTH

Hardly that. I would want her, to be sure, to have risen above certain social conventions. I should not want her, for instance, to hesitate, if she felt genuine love for me, to be the first to make the avowal.

HOFFMANN

[*Has finished his breakfast. He jumps up in half-humorous, half-serious indignation.*] Do you know? That . . . that is a really *shameless* demand. And I prophesy, too, that you'll go about with it unfulfilled to your very end — unless you prefer to drop it first.

HELEN

[*Mastering her deep emotion with difficulty.*] If you gentlemen will excuse me now — the household . . . You know [*to* HOFFMANN] that mama is upstairs and so . . .

HOFFMANN

Don't let us keep you.

HELEN *bows and withdraws.*

HOFFMANN

[*Holding a match case in his hand and walking over to the cigar-box which stands on the table.*]

There's no doubt . . . you do get a man excited . . . it's almost uncanny. [*He takes a cigar from the box and sits down on the sofa in the foreground, left. He cuts off the end of his cigar, and, during what follows, he holds the cigar in his left, the severed end between the fingers of his right hand.*] In spite of all that . . . it does amuse me. And then, you don't know how good it feels to pass a few days in the country this way, away from all business matters. If only to-day this confounded . . . how late is it anyhow? Unfortunately I have to go into town to a dinner to-day. It couldn't be helped: I had to give this banquet. What are you going to do as a business man? Tit for tat. The mine officials are used to that sort of thing.— Well, I've got time enough to smoke another cigar — quite in peace, too.

[*He carries the cigar end to a cuspidor, sits down on the sofa again and lights his cigar.*

LOTH

[*Stands at the table and turns the leaves of a de luxe volume.*] "The Adventures of Count Sandor."

HOFFMANN

You'll find that trash among all the farmers in the neighbourhood.

LOTH

[*Still turning the leaves.*] How old is your sister-in-law?

HOFFMANN

She was twenty-one last August.

LOTH

Is she in delicate health?

HOFFMANN

Don't know. I hardly think so, though. Does she make that impression on you?

LOTH

She really looks rather worried than ill.

HOFFMANN

Well, if you consider all the miseries with her step-mother . . .

LOTH

She seems to be rather excitable, too.

HOFFMANN

In such an environment . . . I should like to see any one who wouldn't become excitable.

LOTH

She seems to possess a good deal of energy.

HOFFMANN

Stubbornness.

LOTH

Deep feeling, too?

HOFFMANN

Too much at times . . .

LOTH

But if the conditions here are so unfortunate for her, why doesn't your sister-in-law live with *your* family?

HOFFMANN

You'd better ask her that! I've often enough made her the offer. Women have these fancies, that's all. [*Holding the cigar in his mouth,* HOFFMANN *takes out a note-book and adds a few items.*] You'll forgive me, won't you, if I have to leave you alone after a while?

LOTH

Assuredly.

HOFFMANN

How long do you think of stay —

LOTH

I mean to look for a lodging very soon. Where does Schimmelpfennig live? The best thing would be to go to see him. He would probably be able to secure one for me. I hope that I'll soon find a suitable place, otherwise I'll spend the night at the inn next door.

HOFFMANN

Why should you? Of course you'll stay with us till morning, at least. To be sure, I'm only a

guest in this house myself, otherwise I'd naturally ask you to . . . you understand?

Loth

Perfectly.

Hoffmann

But do tell me, were you really quite serious when you said . . .

Loth

That I would spend the night at an inn . . .?

Hoffmann

Nonsense . . . Of course not! . . . I mean what you mentioned a while ago — that business about your ridiculous descriptive essay?

Loth

Why not?

Hoffmann

I must confess that I thought you were jesting. [*He gets up and speaks confidentially and half-humorously.*] Now, you don't mean to say you're really capable of undermining the ground here where a friend of yours has been fortunate enough to get a firm foothold?

Loth

You may take my word for it, Hoffmann; I had no idea that you were here. If I had known that . . .

HOFFMANN

[*Jumps up, delighted.*] Very well, then; *very* well. If that's the way things are. And I assure you I'm more than glad that I was not mistaken in you. So now you do know that I am here. It goes without saying that I'll make up to you all your travelling expenses and all extras. No, you needn't be so excessively delicate. It's simply my duty as a friend . . . Now I recognise my excellent old friend again. But I tell you: for a time I had very serious suspicions of you . . . Now you ought to know this, however. Frankly, I'm not as bad as I sometimes pretend to be, not by any means. I have always honoured you, you and your sincere, single-minded efforts. And I'm the last man to fail to attach weight to certain demands of the exploited, oppressed masses, demands which are, most unfortunately, only too well justified.— Oh, you may smile. I'll go further and confess that there is just one party in parliament that has any true ideals, and that's the party to which you belong! Only — as I said before — we must go slowly, slowly! — not try to rush things through. Everything is coming, surely coming about exactly as it ought to. Only patience! Patience . . .

LOTH

One must have patience. That is certain. But one isn't justified on that account in folding one's hands in idleness.

HOFFMANN

Exactly my opinion.— As a matter of fact my thoughts have oftener been in accord with you

than my words. It's a bad habit of mine, I admit. I fell into it in intercourse with people to whom I didn't always want to show my hand . . . Take the question of woman, for instance . . . You expressed a good many things quite strikingly. [*He has, in the meantime, approached the telephone, taken up the receiver and now speaks alternately into the telephone and to* Loth.] My little sister-in-law, by the way, was all ear . . . [*Into the telephone.*] Frank! I want the carriage in ten minutes . . . [*To* Loth.] You made an impression on her . . . [*Into the telephone.*] What — oh, nonsense! — well, that beats everything . . . Then hitch up the black horses at once . . . [*To* Loth.] And why shouldn't you? . . . [*Into the telephone.*] Well, upon my . . .! To the milliner, you say? The madame? The ma — ! Well, very well, then. But at once! Oh, very well! Yes! What's the — ! [*He presses the button of the servants' bell. To* Loth.] You just wait. Give me a chance to heap up the necessary mountain of shekels, and maybe you'll see something happen . . . [Edward *has entered.*] Edward, my leggings, my walking-coat! [Edward *withdraws.*] Maybe something will happen then that you fellows wouldn't believe of me now . . . If, at the end of two or three days — you must stay with us so long by all means — I'd consider it a real insult if you didn't — [*he slips out of his dressing-gown*] — if, at the end of two or three days, you're ready to go, I'll drive you over to the train.

Edward *enters carrying gaiters and walking-coat.*

HOFFMANN

[*Permitting himself to be helped on with the coat.*] So-o! [*Sitting down on a chair.*] Now the boots. [*After he has pulled on one of them.*] There's number one!

LOTH

Perhaps you didn't quite understand me after all.

HOFFMANN

Surely, that's quite possible. A fellow gets out of touch with things. Nothing but musty business affairs. Edward, hasn't the mail come yet? Wait a minute! — Do go up into my room. You'll find a document in a blue cover on the left side of my desk. Get that and put it into the carriage.

EDWARD *goes through the door at the right, reappears through the middle-door and then withdraws.*

LOTH

I simply meant that you hadn't understood me in one particular respect.

HOFFMANN

[*Worrying his foot into the other shoe.*] Ouch! There! [*He rises and stamps his feet.*] There we are. Nothing is more disagreeable than tight shoes . . . What were you saying just now?

LOTH

You were speaking of my departure . . .

HOFFMANN

Well?

LOTH

But I thought I had explained that I must stay here for a specific purpose.

HOFFMANN

[*In extreme consternation and thoroughly indignant at once.*] Look here! . . . That comes near being caddish! — Don't you know what you owe me as your friend?

LOTH

Not, I hope, the betrayal of my cause!

HOFFMANN

[*Beside himself.*] Well then —in that case — I haven't the slightest motive for treating you as a friend. And so I tell you that I consider your appearance and demeanour here — to put it mildly — incredibly impudent.

LOTH

[*Quite calmly.*] Perhaps you'll explain what gives you the right to use such epithets . . .

HOFFMANN

You want an explanation of that? That *is* going to an extreme! Not to feel a thing like that it's necessary to have a rhinoceros-hide instead of skin on one's back! You come here, enjoy my

hospitality, thresh out a few of your thread-bare phrases, turn my sister-in-law's head, go on about old friendship and other pleasant things, and then you tell me quite coolly: you're going to write a descriptive pamphlet about the local conditions. Why, what do you take me to be, anyhow? D'you suppose I don't know that these so-called essays are merely shameless libels? . . . You want to write a denunciation like that, and about our coal district, of all places! Are you so blind that you can't see whom such a rag would harm most keenly? Only me, of course! I tell you, the trade that you demagogues drive ought to be more firmly stamped out than has been done up to now! What is it you do? You make the miners discontented, presumptuous; you stir them up, embitter them, make them rebellious, disobedient, wretched! Then you delude them with promises of mountains of gold, and, in the meantime, grab out of their pockets the few pennies that keep them from starving!

LOTH

Do you consider yourself unmasked now?

HOFFMANN

[*Brutally.*] Oh, pshaw! You ridiculous, pompous wind-bag! What do you suppose I care about being unmasked by you? — Go to work! Leave off this silly drivelling! — Do something! Get ahead! I don't need to sponge on any one for two-hundred marks!

[*He rushes out through the middle door.*

For several moments LOTH *looks calmly after him. Then, no less calmly, he draws a card case out*

of his inner pocket, takes a slip of paper therefrom — HOFFMANN'S *cheque* — *and tears it through several times. Then he drops the scraps slowly into the coal-bin. Hereupon he takes his hat and cane and turns to go. At this moment* HELEN *appears on the threshold of the conservatory.*

HELEN

[*Softly.*] Mr. Loth!

LOTH

[*Quivers and turns.*] Ah, it is you.— Well, then I can at least say farewell to *you.*

HELEN

[*In spite of herself.*] Did you feel the need of doing that?

LOTH

Yes! I did feel it, indeed. Probably, if you were in there, you heard what has taken place here, and — in that case . . .

HELEN

I heard everything.

LOTH

In that case it won't astonish you to see me leave this house with so little ceremony.

HELEN

No-o! I do understand —! But I should like you to feel less harshly toward my brother-in-law. He always repents very quickly. I have often . . .

LOTH

Quite possibly. But for that very reason what he has said just now probably expresses his true opinion of me.— In fact, it is undoubtedly his real opinion.

HELEN

Do you seriously believe that?

LOTH

Oh, yes, quite seriously. And so . . . [*He walks toward her and takes her hand.*] I hope that life will be kind to you. [*He turns but at once stops again.*] I don't know . . .! or rather: — [*he looks calmly and directly into* HELEN'S *face*] — I do know, I know — at this moment the knowledge becomes clear — that it is not so easy for me to go away from here . . . and . . . yes . . . and . . . well, yes . . .!

HELEN

But if I begged you — begged you truly — from my heart . . . to stay a little longer —

LOTH

So you do not share Hoffmann's opinion?

HELEN

No! — and that — that is just what I wanted to be sure — quite sure to tell you, before . . . before — you — went.

LOTH

[*Grasps her hand once more.*] It helps me *much* to hear you say that.

HELEN

[*Struggling with herself. Her excitement mounts rapidly and to the point of unconsciousness. She stammers out half-chokingly.*] And more, oh, more I wanted to . . . to tell you . . . that I esteem and . . . and . . . honour you as . . . I've done no . . . man before . . . that I trust . . . you . . . that I'm ready to . . . to prove that . . . that I feel toward you . . .

[*She sinks, swooning into his arms.*

LOTH

Helen!

THE CURTAIN DROPS QUICKLY

THE FOURTH ACT

The farmyard, as in the second act. Time: a quarter of an hour after HELEN'S *avowal.*

MARIE *and* GOLISCH *the cowherd drag a wooden chest down the stairs that lead to the loft.* LOTH *comes from the house. He is dressed for travelling and goes slowly and thoughtfully diagonally across the yard. Before he turns into the path that leads to the inn, he comes upon* HOFFMANN, *who is hurrying toward him through the gateway.*

HOFFMANN

[*In top hat and kid gloves.*] Don't be angry with me. [*He obstructs* LOTH'S *way and grasps both of his hands.*] I take it all back herewith . . . Mention any reparation you demand . . . I am ready to give you any! . . . I'm most truly, most sincerely sorry.

LOTH

That helps neither of us very much.

HOFFMANN

Oh, if you would just . . . Look here, now . . .! A man can't well do more than that. I assure you that my conscience gave me no rest! I

turned back just before reaching Jauer . . . That should convince you of the seriousness of my feeling. Where were you going?

LOTH

To the inn — for the moment.

HOFFMANN

Oh, that's an affront you simply can't offer me . . . no, you mustn't — simply. I believe that I did hurt you badly, of course. And probably it's not the kind of thing that can be wiped out with just a few words. Only don't rob me of any chance . . . of every possibility to prove to you . . . D'you hear? Now turn back and stay at least — at least until to-morrow. Or till . . . till I come back. I want to talk it all over with you at leisure. You can't refuse me that favour.

LOTH

If you set so much store by it all . . .

HOFFMANN

A great deal! . . . on my honour! . . . I care immensely. So come, come! Don't run away!

[*He leads* LOTH, *who offers no further resistance, back into the house.*

The dismissed maid and the boy have, in the meantime, placed the chest on a wheelbarrow and GOLISCH *has put on the shoulder strap.*

MARIE

[*Slipping a coin into* GOLISCH'S *hand.*] There's somethin' fer you.

GOLISCH

[*Refusing it.*] Keep yer penny.

MARIE

Aw! Ye donkey!

GOLISCH

Well, I don't care.

[*He takes the coin and puts it into his leathern purse.*

MRS. SPILLER

[*Appears at one of the windows of the house and calls out:*] Marie.

MARIE

What d'ye want now?

MRS. SPILLER

[*Appearing almost immediately at the door of the house.*] The madame's willing to keep you, if you promise . . .

MARIE

A stinkin' lot I'll promise her. Go on, Golisch!

MRS. SPILLER

[*Approaching.*] The madame is willing to increase your wages, if you . . . [*Whispering sud-*

denly.] What d'ye care, girl! She just gits kinder rough now an' then.

MARIE

[*Furiously.*] She c'n keep her dirty money to herself! — [*Tearfully.*] I'd rather starve! [*She follows* GOLISCH, *who has preceded her with the wheelbarrow.*] Naw, just to think of it! — It's enough to make you . . .

[*She disappears, as does* MRS. SPILLER.

Through the great gate comes BAER, *called* HOPPING BAER. *He is a lank fellow with a vulture's neck and goitre. His feet and head are bare. His breeches, badly ravelled at the bottom, scarcely reach below the knee. The top of his head is bald. Such hair as he has, brown, dusty, and clotted, hangs down over his shoulders. His gait is ostrich-like. By a cord he draws behind him a child's toy waggon full of sand. His face is beardless. His whole appearance shows him to be a god-forsaken peasant lad in the twenties.*

BAER

[*With a strangely bleating voice.*] Sa—a—and! Sa—a—and!

He crosses the yard and disappears between the house and the stables. HOFFMANN *and* HELEN *come from the house.* HELEN *is pale and carries an empty glass in her hand.*

HOFFMANN

[*To* HELEN.] Entertain him a bit! You understand? Don't let him go. I should hate to have

him.— Injured vanity like that! . . . Good-bye! . . . Oh, maybe I oughtn't to go at all? How is Martha doing? — I've got a queer kind of feeling as if pretty soon . . . Nonsense! — Good-bye! . . . awful hurry! . . . [*Calls out.*] Franz! Give the horses their heads!

[*Leaves rapidly through the main gate.*

Helen *goes to the pump, fills her glass and empties it at one draught. She empties half of another glass. She then sets the glass on the pump and then strolls slowly, looking backward from time to time, through the gateway.* Baer *emerges from between the house and the stables and stops with his waggon before the house door, where* Miele *takes some sand from him. In the meantime* Kahl *has become visible at the right, beyond the dividing fence. He is in conversation with* Mrs. Spiller, *who is on the hither side of the fence and therefore close to the entrance of the yard. As the conversation proceeds, both walk slowly along the fence.*

Mrs. Spiller

[*Mildly agonised.*] Ah yes — m — Mr. Kahl! I have — m — many a time thought of — m — you when . . . when our — m — dear Miss Helen . . . She is so to — m — speak betrothed to you and so — m — ah! I — m — must say . . . in my time . . .!

Kahl

[*Mounts a rustic bench under the oak-tree and fastens a bird trap to the lowest branch.*] When is

th-that b-beast of a doctor goin' to git out o' here? Ha?

Mrs. Spiller

Ah, Mr. Kahl! I don't — m — think so very soon.— Ah, Mr. Kahl, I — m — have, so to speak, come — m — down in the world, but I — m — know — m — what refinement is. In this respect, Mr. Kahl, I — must say — dear Miss Helen isn't — m — acting quite right toward you. No — m — in that respect, so to speak — m — I've never had anything with which to — m — reproach myself — m — my conscience, dear Mr. Kahl, is as pure in that — m — respect — so to speak, as new-fallen snow.

Baer *has finished the sale of his sand and, at this moment, passes by* Kahl *in order to leave the yard.*

Kahl

[*Discovers* Baer *and calls out.*] Here, hopping Baer! Hop a bit!

Baer *takes a huge leap.*

Kahl

[*Bellowing with laughter.*] Here, hopping Baer! Hop again!

Mrs. Spiller

Well — m — Mr. Kahl, what I want to say is — m — I have the best — m — intentions toward you. You ought to observe very — m — carefully. Something — m — is going on between our young lady and — m —

KAHL

If I could just get my dogs on that son of a— . . . Just once!

MRS. SPILLER

[Mysteriously.] And I'm afraid you—m—don't know what kind of an individual that—m—is. Oh, I am so—m—truly sorry for our dear young lady. The wife of the bailiff—she has it straight from the office, I think. He is said to be a—m—really dangerous person. The woman said her husband had—m—orders, just think! actually—m—to keep his eye on him.

LOTH comes from the house and looks about.

MRS. SPILLER

You see, now he is going—m—after our young lady. Oh, it's too sad—m—for anything.

KAHL

Aw! You wait an' see! [Exit.

MRS. SPILLER goes to the door of the house. In passing LOTH she makes a deep bow. Then she disappears into the house.

LOTH disappears slowly through the gateway. The coachman's wife, an emaciated, married, starved woman, emerges from between the house and the stables. She carries a large pot hidden under her apron and slinks off toward the cow-shed, looking about fearfully at every moment. She disappears into the door

of the stable. The two Maids, *each pushing before her a wheel-barrow laden with clover, enter by the gate.* Beipst, *his pipe in his mouth and his scythe across his shoulder, follows them.* Liese *has wheeled her barrow in front of the left,* Auguste *hers in front of the right door of the barn, and both begin to carry great armfuls of clover into the building.*

Liese

[*Coming back out of the stable.*] Guste! D'ye know, Marie is gone.

Auguste

Aw, don' tell me!

Liese

Go in there'n ask the coachman's wife. She's gittin' her a drop o' milk.

Beipst

[*Hangs up his scythe on the wall.*] Ye'd better not let that Spiller creature get wind o' it.

Auguste

Oh, Lord, no! Who'd think o' it!

Liese

A poor woman like that with eight —

Auguste

Eight little brats. They wants to be fed!

LIESE

An' they wouldn't give her a drop o' milk even. It's low, that's what I calls it.

AUGUSTE

Where is she milkin'?

LIESE

Way back there.

BEIPST

[*Fills his pipe. Holding his tobacco-pouch with his teeth he mumbles.*] Ye say Marie's gone?

LIESE

Yes, it's true an' certain. The parson's hired man slept with her.

BEIPST

[*Replacing the tobacco-pouch in his pocket.*] Everybody feels that way sometimes — even a woman. [*He lights his pipe and disappears through the gateway. In going:*] I'm goin' fer a bit o' breakfast.

THE COACHMAN'S WIFE

[*Hiding the pot full of milk carefully under her apron, sticks her head out of the stable door.*] Anybody in sight?

LIESE

Ye c'n come if ye'll hurry. There ain't nobody. Come! Hurry!

The Coachman's Wife

[*Passing by the maids.*] It's fer the nursin' baby.

Liese

[*Calling out after her.*] Hurry! Some one's comin'.

The Coachman's Wife *disappears between the house and the stable.*

Auguste

It's only the young Miss.

The maids now finish unloading their wheelbarrows and then thrust them under the doorway. They both go into the cow-shed.

Helen *and* Loth *enter by the gate.*

Loth

A disgusting fellow — this Kahl — an insolent sneak.

Helen

I think in the arbour in front — [*They pass through the small gate into the little garden by the house and into the arbour.*] It's my favourite place. I'm less disturbed there than anywhere if, sometimes, I want to read something.

Loth

It's a pretty place.— Really. [*Both sit down in the arbour, consciously keeping at some distance from one another. An interval of silence. Then*

Loth.] You have very beautiful and abundant hair.

Helen

Yes, my brother-in-law says so too. He thought he had scarcely seen anyone with so much — not even in the city . . . The braid at the top is as thick as my wrist . . . When I let it down, it reaches to my knees. Feel it. It's like silk, isn't it?

Loth

It *is* like silk.

[*A tremour passes through him. He bends down and kisses her hair.*

Helen

[*Frightened.*] Ah, don't. If . . .

Loth

Helen! Were you in earnest a while ago?

Helen

Oh, I am so ashamed — so deeply ashamed. What have I done? Why, I've thrown myself at you. That's what I've done. I wonder what you take me for?

Loth

[*Draws nearer to her and takes her hand in his.*] Ah, you mustn't let *that* trouble you.

HELEN

[*Sighing.*] Oh, if Sister Schmittgen knew of that — I dare not imagine it.

LOTH

Who is Sister Schmittgen?

HELEN

One of my teachers at boarding-school.

LOTH

How can you worry about Sister Schmittgen!

HELEN

She was very good.

[*Laughing heartily to herself suddenly.*

LOTH

Why do you laugh all at once?

HELEN

[*Half between respect and jest.*] Oh, when she stood in the choir and sang — she had only one long tooth left — then she was supposed to sing: "Trouble yourselves not, my people!"— and it always sounded like: "'Rouble, 'rouble yourselves not, my people!" It was too funny. And we always had to laugh so . . . when it sounded through the chapel: "'Rouble, 'rouble!" [*She laughs more and more heartily.* LOTH *becomes infected by her mirth. She seems so sweet to him at this moment that he wants to take the opportu-*

nity to put his arms about her. Helen *wards him off.*] Ah, no! no! Just think! I threw myself at you!

Loth

Oh, don't say such things!

Helen

But it isn't my fault; you have only yourself to blame for it. Why do you demand . . .

Loth *puts his arm about her once more and draws her closer to him. At first she resists a little, then she yields and gazes, with frank blessedness, into the joyous face of* Loth *which bends above her. Involuntarily, in the awkwardness of her very timidity, she kisses his mouth. Both grow red; then* Loth *returns her kiss. His caress is long and heartfelt. A giving and taking of kisses — silent and eloquent at once — is, for a time, all that passes between them.* Loth *is the first to speak.*

Loth

Nellie, dearest! Nellie is your name, isn't it?

Helen

[*Kisses him.*] Call me something else . . . call me what you like best . . .

Loth

Dearest! . . .

The exchange of kisses and of mutual contemplation is repeated.

HELEN

[*Held tight in* LOTH'S *arms, resting her head on his shoulder, looking up at him with dim, happy eyes, whispers ecstatically.*] Oh, how beautiful! How beautiful!

LOTH

To die with you — thus . . .

HELEN

[*Passionately.*] To live! . . . [*She disengages herself from his embrace.*] Why die now? . . . now . . .

LOTH

You must not misunderstand me. Always, in happy moments, it has come over me with a sense of intoxication — the consciousness of the fact that it is in our power, in my power, to embrace — you understand?

HELEN

To embrace death, if you desired it?

LOTH

[*Quite devoid of sentimentality.*] Yes! And the thought of death has nothing horrible in it for me. On the contrary, it seems like the thought of a friend. One calls and knows surely that death will come. And so one can rise above so many, many things — above one's past, above one's future fate . . . [*Looking at* HELEN'S *hand.*] What a lovely hand you have.

[*He caresses it.*

HELEN

Ah, yes! — so! . . .

[*She nestles anew in his arms.*

LOTH

No, do you know, I haven't really lived — until now!

HELEN

Do you think I have? . . . And I feel faint — faint with happiness. Dear God, how suddenly it all came . . .

LOTH

Yes, it came all at once . . .

HELEN

Listen, I feel this way: all the days of my life are like one day; but yesterday and to-day are like a year — a whole year!

LOTH

Didn't I come till yesterday?

HELEN

Of course not! Naturally! That's just it! . . Oh, and you don't even know it!

LOTH

And surely it seems to me . . .

Helen

Doesn't it? Like a whole, long year! Doesn't it? [*Half jumping up.*] Wait . . .! Don't you hear . . . [*They move away from each other.*] Oh, but I don't care one bit! I am so full of courage now.

[*She remains seated and invites* Loth *with her eyes to move nearer, which he does.*

Helen

[*In* Loth's *arms.*] Dear, what are we going to do first?

Loth

Your step-mother, I suppose, would send me packing.

Helen

Oh, my step-mother . . . that won't matter . . . it doesn't even concern her! I do as I please! I have my mother's fortune, you must know.

Loth

Did you think on that account . . .

Helen

I am of age; father will have to give me my share.

Loth

You are not, then, on good terms with everyone here? — Where has your father gone to?

HELEN

Gone? You have? . . . Oh, you haven't seen my father yet?

LOTH

No; Hoffmann told me . . .

HELEN

Surely, you saw him once.

LOTH

Not that I know of. Where, dearest?

HELEN

I . . . [*She bursts into tears.*] No, I can't. I can't tell you . . . it's too, too fearful!

LOTH

So fearful? But, Helen, is anything wrong with your father?

HELEN

Oh, don't ask me! Not now, at least! Some time . . .!

LOTH

I will not urge you to tell me anything, dear, that you don't voluntarily speak of. And, look, as far as the money is concerned . . . if the worst came . . . though I don't exactly earn superfluous cash with my articles — still, in the end, we could both manage to exist on it.

HELEN

And I wouldn't be idle either, would I? But the other way is better. My inheritance is more than enough.— And there's your life work . . . no, you're not to give that up under any circumstances . . . now less than ever . . .! Now you're to have your real chance to pursue it!

LOTH

[*Kissing her tenderly.*] Dearest, best . . .

HELEN

Oh, do you truly care . . .? Truly? Truly?

LOTH

Truly.

HELEN

You must say truly a hundred times.

LOTH

Truly and truly and truthfully.

HELEN

Oh, now, you're not playing fair!

LOTH

I am, though. That truthfully is equal to a hundred trulys.

HELEN

Oh? Is that the custom in Berlin?

LOTH

No, but it is here in Witzdorf.

HELEN

Oh! But now, look at my little finger and don't laugh.

LOTH

Gladly.

HELEN

Did you ever love any one before your first betrothed? Oh, now you *are* laughing!

LOTH

I will tell you in all seriousness, dearest; indeed, I think it is my duty . . . In the course of my life a considerable number of women . . .

HELEN

[*With a quick and violent start, pressing her hand over his mouth.*] For the love of . . . Tell me that some day, later, when we are old, when the years have passed, when I shall say to you: "now!" Do you hear! Not before!

LOTH

Just as you will.

HELEN

Rather tell me something sweet now! . . . Listen: repeat after me:

LOTH

What?

HELEN

I have loved —

LOTH

I have loved —

HELEN

Always you only —

LOTH

Always you only —

HELEN

All the days of my life —

LOTH

All the days of my life —

HELEN

And will love you only as long as I live —

LOTH

And will love you only as long as I live — and that is true so surely as I am an honest man.

HELEN

[*Joyfully.*] I didn't add that!

LOTH

But I did. [*They kiss each other.*

HELEN

[*Hums very softly.*] "Thou in my heart art lying . . ."

LOTH

But now you must confess too.

HELEN

Anything you like.

LOTH

Confess now! Am I the first?

HELEN

No.

LOTH

Who?

HELEN

[*Laughing out in the fullness of her joy.*] Willy Kahl!

LOTH

[*Laughing.*] Who else?

HELEN

Oh, no, there's no one else really. You must believe me . . . Truly there wasn't. Why should I tell you a falsehood?

LOTH

So there *was* someone else?

HELEN

[*Passionately.*] Oh, please, please, please, don't ask me now.

[*She hides her face in her hands and weeps apparently without any reason.*

LOTH

But . . . but Nellie! I'm not insistent; I don't want to . . .

HELEN

Later . . . I'll tell you later . . . not now!

LOTH

As I said before, dearest.

HELEN

There was some one — I want you to know — whom I . . . because . . . because among wicked people he seemed the least wicked. Oh, it is so different now. [*Weeping against* LOTH's *neck: stormily.*] Ah, if I only didn't have to leave you at all any more! Oh, if I could only go away with you right here on the spot!

LOTH

I suppose you have a very unhappy time in the house here?

HELEN

Oh, dear! — It's just frightful — the things that happen here. It's a life like — that . . . like that of the beasts of the field. Oh, I would have died without you. I shudder to think of it!

LOTH

I believe it would calm you, dearest, if you would tell me everything quite openly.

HELEN

Yes, to be sure. But I don't think I can bear to. Not now, at least, not yet. And I'm really afraid to.

LOTH

You were at boarding-school, weren't you?

HELEN

My mother decided that I be sent — on her death-bed.

LOTH

Was your sister there with you?

HELEN

No, she was always at home . . . And so when, four years ago, I came back from school, I found a father — who . . . a step-mother — who . . . a sister . . . guess, can't you guess what I mean!

LOTH

I suppose your step-mother is quarrelsome? Perhaps jealous? unloving?

HELEN

My father . . .?

Loth

Well, in all probability he dances to her music. Perhaps she tyrannises over him?

Helen

Oh, if it were nothing else? . . . No! It is too frightful! — You can't possibly guess that *that* . . . my father . . . that it was *my* father whom you . . .

Loth

Don't weep, Nellie! . . . Look, you almost make me feel as though I ought to insist that you tell . . .

Helen

No, no, it isn't possible. I haven't the strength! — not yet!

Loth

But you're wearing yourself out this way!

Helen

But I'm so ashamed, so boundlessly ashamed! Why, you will drive me from you in horror . . .! It's beyond anything . . .! It's loathsome!

Loth

Nellie, dear, you don't know me if you can think such things of me! Repulse you! Drive you from me! Do I seem such a brute to you?

HELEN

My brother-in-law said that you would quite calmly . . . But no, no, you wouldn't? Would you? — You wouldn't just ruthlessly walk over me? Oh! you won't! You mustn't! I don't know what *would* become of me!

LOTH

But, dear, it's senseless to talk so. There's no earthly reason!

HELEN

But if there were a reason, it might happen!

LOTH

No! Not at all!

HELEN

But if you could think of a reason?

LOTH

There are reasons, to be sure; but they're not in question.

HELEN

And what kind of reasons?

LOTH

I would have to be ruthless only toward some one who would make me betray my own most ideal self.

HELEN

And surely, I wouldn't want to do that! And yet I can't rid myself of the feeling —

LOTH

What feeling, dearest?

HELEN

Perhaps it's just because I'm nothing but a silly girl. There's so little to me — Why, I don't even know what it is — to have principles! Isn't that frightful? But I just simply love you so! And you're so good, and so great, and so very wise! I'm so afraid that you might, sometime, discover — when I say something foolish, or do something — that it's all a mistake, that I'm much too silly for you . . . I'm really as worthless and as silly as I can be!

LOTH

What shall I say to all that? You're everything to me, just everything in the whole world. I can't say more!

HELEN

And I'm very strong and healthy, too . . .

LOTH

Tell me, are your parents in good health?

HELEN

Indeed they are. That is, mother died in childbirth. But father is still well; in fact he must have a very strong constitution. But . . .

LOTH

Well, you see. Everything is . . .

HELEN

But if my parents were not strong —;

LOTH

[*Kissing* HELEN.] But then, they are, dear.

HELEN

But suppose they were not —?

MRS. KRAUSE *pushes open a window in the house and calls out into the yard.*

MRS. KRAUSE

Hey! Girls! Gi—rls!

LIESE

[*From within the cow-shed.*] Yes, Missis?

MRS. KRAUSE

Run to Mueller's! It's startin'!

LIESE

What! To the midwife, ye mean?

Mrs. Krause

Are ye standin' on your ear?

[*She slams the window.*

Liese *runs out of the cow-shed with a little shawl over her head and then out of the yard.*

Mrs. Spiller

[*Calls.*] Miss Helen! Oh, Miss Helen!

Helen

What do you suppose is —?

Mrs. Spiller

[*Approaching the arbour.*] Miss Helen!

Helen

Oh, I know. It's my sister who — You must go, 'round that way!

[Loth *withdraws rapidly by the right foreground.* Helen *steps out from the arbour.*

Mrs. Spiller

Oh, Miss, there you are at last!

Helen

What is it?

Mrs. Spiller

Ah —m — your sister.

[*She whispers into* Helen's *ear.*

HELEN

My brother-in-law ordered that the doctor be sent for at any sign of —

MRS. SPILLER

Oh — m — dear Miss Helen — m — she doesn't really want a doctor. These doctors — m — oh, these doctors — m — with God's help . . .

MIELE *comes from the house.*

HELEN

Miele, go at once for Dr. Schimmelpfennig!

MRS. KRAUSE

[*From the window, arrogantly.*] Miele! You come up here!

HELEN

[*In a tone of command.*] Miele, you go for the doctor! [MIELE *withdraws into the house.*] Well, then I must go myself . . .

[*She goes into the house and comes back out at once carrying her straw hat.*

MRS. SPILLER

It'll go wrong — m — If you call the doctor, dear Miss Helen,— m — it will surely go wrong!

HELEN *passes her by.* MRS. SPILLER *withdraws into the house, shaking her head. As* HELEN *turns at the driveway* KAHL *is standing at the boundary fence.*

KAHL

[*Calls out to* HELEN.] What's the matter over at your place?

HELEN *does not stop, nor does she deign to notice or answer* KAHL.

KAHL

[*Laughing.*] I guess ye got a pig killin'?

CURTAIN

THE FIFTH ACT

The same room as in the first act. Time: toward two o'clock in the morning. The room is in complete darkness. Through the open middle door light penetrates into it from the illuminated hall. The light also falls clearly upon the wooden stairway that leads to the upper floor. The conversation in this act — with very few exceptions — is carried on in a muffled tone.

EDWARD *enters through the middle door, carrying a light. He lights the hanging lamp (it is a gas lamp) over the corner table. While he is thus employed,* LOTH *also enters by the middle door.*

EDWARD

O Lord! Such goin's on! It'd take a monster to be able to close a eye here!

LOTH

I didn't even try to sleep. I have been writing.

EDWARD

You don't say! [*He succeeds in lighting the lamp.*] There! Well, sure, I guess it's hard

enough, too . . . Maybe you'd like to have paper and ink, sir?

LOTH

Perhaps that would be . . . If you would be so good, then, Mr. Edward?

EDWARD

[*Placing pen and ink on the table.*] I'm always thinkin' that any honest fellow has got to get all the work there's in every bone for every dirty penny. You can't even get your rest o' nights. [*More and more confidentially.*] But this crew here! They don't do one thing — a lazy, worthless crew, a — . . . I suppose, sir, that you've got to be at it early and late too, like all honest folks, for your bit o' bread.

LOTH

I wish I didn't have to.

EDWARD

Me too, you betcher.

LOTH

I suppose Miss Helen is with her sister?

EDWARD

Yes, sir, an', honestly, she's a good girl, she is; hasn't budged since it started.

LOTH

[*Looking at his watch.*] The pains began at eleven o'clock in the morning. So they've already lasted fifteen hours — fifteen long hours —!

EDWARD

Lord, yes! — And that's what they calls the weaker sex. But she's just barely gaspin'.

LOTH

And is Mr. Hoffmann upstairs, too?

EDWARD

Yes, an' I can tell you, he's goin' on like a woman.

LOTH

Well, I suppose it isn't very easy to have to watch that.

EDWARD

You're right there, indeed. Dr. Schimmelpfennig came just now. There's a man for you: rough as rough can be — but sugar ain't nothing to his real feelings. But just tell me what's become of little, old Berlin in all this . . .

[*He interrupts himself with a* Gee-rusalem! *as* HOFFMANN *and the* DOCTOR *are seen coming down the stairs.*

HOFFMANN *and* DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG *enter.*

HOFFMANN

Surely — you will stay with us from now on.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Yes, I suppose I will stay now.

Hoffmann

That's a very, very great consolation to me.—Will you have a glass of wine? Surely you'll drink a glass of wine, Doctor?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

If you want to do something for me, have a cup of coffee prepared.

Hoffmann

With pleasure. Edward! Coffee for the doctor! [Edward *withdraws.*] Are you . . .? Are you satisfied with the way things are going?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

So long as your wife's strength keeps up there is, at all events, no direct danger. But why didn't you call in the young midwife? I remember having recommended her to you.

Hoffmann

My mother-in-law . . .! What is one to do? And, to be frank with you, my wife has no confidence in the young woman either.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

But your ladies place confidence in this old fossil? Well, I hope they'll . . . And I suppose you would like to go back upstairs?

HOFFMANN

Yes, honestly, I can't get much rest down here.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

It would be better undoubtedly if you were to go somewhere — out of the house.

HOFFMANN

With the best will in the world, I —. [LOTH *arises from the sofa in the dim foreground and approaches the two.*] Hallo, Loth, there you are too!

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

[*Surprised in the extreme.*] Well, I'll be —!

LOTH

I heard that you were here. I would have looked you up to-morrow without fail.

[*They shake hands cordially.* HOFFMANN *takes the opportunity to wash down a glass of brandy at the side-board and then to creep back upstairs on tiptoe.*

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

So you've evidently forgotten — ha, ha, ha — that ridiculous old affair?

[*He lays aside his hat and cane.*

LOTH

Long ago, Schimmel!

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Well, so have I, as you can well imagine. [*They shake hands once more.*] I've had so few pleasant surprises in this hole, that this one seems positively queer to me. And it is strange that we should meet just here. It *is*.

Loth

And you faded clear out of sight. Otherwise I'd have routed you out long ago.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Oh, I just dived below the surface like a seal. Made deep-sea investigations. In about a year and a half I hope to emerge once more. A man must be financially independent — do you know that? — in order to achieve anything useful.

Loth

So you, too, are making money here?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Naturally and as much as possible. What else is there to do here?

Loth

You might have let some one hear from you!

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

I beg your pardon. But if I had been heard from, I would have heard from you fellows — and I absolutely didn't want to hear. Nothing —

nothing. That would simply have kept me from exploiting my diggings here.

The two men walk slowly up and down the room.

LOTH

I see. But then you mustn't be surprised to hear that . . . well, they all, without an exception, really gave you up as hopeless.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

That's like them — the scamps! They'll be made to take notice.

LOTH

Schimmel — otherwise the "rough husk"!

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

I wish you had had to live here among the farmers for six years. Hellhounds — every one of them.

LOTH

I can imagine that.— But how in the world did you get to Witzdorf?

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

The way such things do happen! You remember I had to skin out from Jena that time.

LOTH

Was that before my crash?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Yes, a short time after we'd given up living together. So I took up medicine at Zuerich, first simply so as to have something against a time of need. But then the thing began to interest me, and now I'm a doctor, heart and soul.

Loth

And about this place. How did you get here?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Very simply. When I got through I said to myself: first of all you've got to have a sufficient pile. I thought of America, South and North America, of Africa, Australia and the isles of the sea . . . In the end it occurred to me, however, that my escapade had become outlawed; and so I made up my mind to creep back into the old trap.

Loth

And how about your Swiss examinations?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Why, I simply had to go through the whole rigmarole once more.

Loth

Man! You passed the state medical examination twice over?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Yes, luckily I then discovered this fat pasture here.

LOTH

Your toughness is certainly enviable.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

All very well, unless one collapses suddenly.— Well, it wouldn't matter so greatly after all.

LOTH

Have you a very large practice?

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

Oh, yes. Occasionally I don't get to bed till five o'clock in the morning. And at seven my consultation hour begins again.

EDWARD *comes in, bringing coffee.*

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

[*Sitting down at the table, to* EDWARD.] Thank you, Edward.— [*To* LOTH.] — The way I swill coffee is — uncanny.

LOTH

You'd better give that up.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

What is one to do? [*He takes small swallows.*] As I told you awhile ago — another year; then — all this stops. At least, I hope so.

LOTH

Don't you intend to practice after that at all?

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

Don't think so. No — no more. [*He pushes back the tray with the dishes and wipes his mouth.*] By the way, let's see your hand. [LOTH *holds up both his hands for inspection.*] I see. You've taken no wife to your bosom yet. Haven't found one, I suppose. I remember you always wanted primæval vigour in the woman of your choice on account of the soundness of the strain. And you're quite right, too. If one takes a risk, it ought to be a good one. Or maybe you've become less stringent in that respect.

LOTH

Not a bit! You may take your oath.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

I wish the farmers around here had such notions. But they're in a wretched condition — degeneration along the whole line . . . [*He has half taken his cigar case from his inner pocket but lets it slip back and arises as a sound penetrates through the door which is only ajar.*] Wait a moment! [*He goes on tiptoe to the door leading to the hall and listens. A door is heard to open and close, and for several moments the moans of the woman in labour are audible. The* DOCTOR, *turning to* LOTH, *says softly.*] Excuse me!

[*And goes out.*

For several seconds, while the slamming of doors is heard and the sound of people running up and down the stairs, LOTH *paces the room. Then he sits down in the arm-chair in the*

foreground, right. Helen *slips in and throws her arms about* Loth, *who has not observed her coming from behind.*

Loth

[*Looking around and embracing her in turn.*] Nellie! [*He draws her down upon his knee in spite of her gentle resistance.* Helen *weeps under his kisses.*] Don't cry, Nellie! Why are you crying so?

Helen

Why? Oh, if I knew! . . . I keep thinking that I won't find you here. Just now I had such a fright . . .

Loth

But why?

Helen

Because I heard you go out of your room — Oh, and my sister — we poor, poor women! — oh, she's suffering too much!

Loth

The pain is soon forgotten and there is no danger of death.

Helen

Oh, but she is praying so to die. She wails and wails: Do let me die! . . . The doctor!

[*She jumps up and slips into the conservatory.*

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

[*On entering.*] I do really wish now that that little woman upstairs would hurry a bit! [*He sits down beside the table, takes out his cigar case again, extracts a cigar from it and lays the latter down on the table.*] You'll come over to my house afterward, won't you? I have a necessary evil with two horses standing out there in which we can drive straight over. [*He taps his cigar against the edge of the table.*] Oh, the holy state of matrimony! O Lord! [*Striking a match.*] So you're still pure, free, pious and merry?

LOTH

You might better have waited a few more days with that question.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

[*His cigar is lit now.*] Oho! I see! — [*laughing*] — so you've caught on to my tricks at last!

LOTH

Are you still so frightfully pessimistic in regard to women?

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

*Fright*fully! [*Watching the drifting smoke of his cigar.*] In other years I was a pessimist, so to speak, by presentiment . . .

LOTH

Have you had very special experiences in the meantime?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

That's just it. My shingle reads: Specialist for Diseases of Women.— The practice of medicine, I assure you, makes a man terribly wise . . . terribly . . . sane . . .; it's a specific against all kinds of delusions.

Loth

[*Laughing.*] Well, then we can fall back into our old tone at once. I want you to know . . . I haven't caught on to your tricks at all. Less than ever now . . . But I am to understand, I suppose, that you've exchanged your old hobby?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Hobby?

Loth

The question of woman was in those days in a certain way your pet subject.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

I see! And why should I have exchanged it?

Loth

If you think even worse of women than . . .

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

[*Somewhat aroused. He gets up and walks to and fro while he is speaking.*] I don't think evil of women.— Not a bit! — I think evil only of marrying . . . of marriage . . . of marriage and

— at most, of men . . . The woman question, you think, has ceased to interest me? What do you suppose I've worked here for, during six years, like a cart horse? Surely in order to devote at last all the power that is in me to the solution of that question. Didn't you know that from the beginning?

LOTH

How do you suppose I could have known it?

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

Well, as I said . . . and I've already gathered a lot of very significant material that will be of some service to me! Sh! I've got the bad habit of raising my voice. [*He falls silent, listens, goes to the door and comes back.*] But what took you among these gold farmers?

LOTH

I would like to study the local conditions.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

[*In a repressed tone.*] What a notion! [*Still more softly.*] I can give you plenty of material there too.

LOTH

To be sure. You must be thoroughly informed as to the conditions here. How do things look among the families around here?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

*Mis*erable! There's nothing but drunkenness, gluttony, inbreeding and, in consequence,— degeneration along the whole line.

Loth

With exceptions, surely?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Hardly.

Loth

[*Disquieted.*] Didn't the temptation ever come to you to . . . to marry a daughter of one of these Witzdorf gold farmers?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

The devil! Man, what do you take me for? You might as well ask whether I . . .

Loth

[*Very pale.*] But why . . . why?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Because . . . Anything wrong with you?

[*He regards* Loth *steadily for several moments.*

Loth

Certainly not. What should be wrong?

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

[*Has suddenly become very thoughtful. He stops in his walking suddenly and whistles softly, glances at* LOTH *and then mutters to himself.*] That's bad!

LOTH

You act very strangely all of a sudden.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

Sh!

[*He listens carefully and then leaves the room quickly by the middle door.*

HELEN

[*Comes at the end of several seconds from the middle door. She cries out.*] Alfred! — Alfred! . . . You're here. Oh, thank God!

LOTH

Well, dear, did you suppose I had run away?

[*They embrace each other.*

HELEN

[*Bends back. With unmistakable terror in her face.*] Alfred!

LOTH

What is it, dearest?

HELEN

Nothing, nothing . . .

LOTH

But there must be something.

HELEN

You seemed so cold . . . Oh, I have such foolish fancies . .

LOTH

How are things going upstairs?

HELEN

The doctor is quarreling with the midwife.

LOTH

Isn't it going to end soon?

HELEN

How do I know? But when it ends, when it ends — then . . .

LOTH

What then? . . . Tell me, please, what were you going to say?

HELEN

Then we ought soon to go away from here. At once! Oh, right away!

LOTH

If you think that would really be best, Nellie —

HELEN

It is! it is! We mustn't wait! It's the best thing — for you and for me. If you don't take me soon, you'll just leave me quite, and then, and then . . . it would just be all over with me.

LOTH

How distrustful you are, Nellie.

HELEN

Don't say that, dearest. Anybody would trust you, would just have to trust you! . . . When I am your own, oh, then . . . then you surely wouldn't leave me. [*As if beside herself.*] I beseech you! Don't go away! Only don't leave me! Don't — go, Alfred! If you go away without me, I would just have to die, just have to die!

LOTH

But you are strange! . . . And you say you're not distrustful! Or perhaps they're worrying you, torturing you terribly here — more than ever . . . At all events we'll leave this very night. I am ready. And so, as soon as you are — we can go.

HELEN

[*Falling around his neck with a cry of joyous gratitude.*] Dear — dearest!

[*She kisses him madly and hurries out.*

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG *comes in through the middle door and catches a glimpse of* HELEN *disappearing into the conservatory.*

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Who was that? — Ah, yes! [*To himself.*] Poor thing!

[*He sits down beside the table with a sigh, finds his old cigar, throws it aside, takes a new cigar from the case and starts to knock it gently against the edge of the table. Thoughtfully he looks away across it.*

Loth

[*Watching him.*] That's just the way you used to loosen every cigar before smoking it eight years ago.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

It's possible — [*When he has lit and begun to smoke the cigar.*] Listen to me!

Loth

Yes; what is it?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

I take it that, so soon as the affair is over, you'll come along with me.

Loth

Can't be done. I'm sorry.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Once in a while, you know, one does feel like talking oneself out thoroughly.

LOTH

I feel that need quite as much as you do. But you can see from just that how utterly out of my power it is to go . . .

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

But suppose I give you my emphatic and, in a way, solemn assurance that there is a specific, an extremely important matter that I'd like — no, that I must discuss with you to-night, Loth!

LOTH

Queer! You don't expect me to take that in deadly earnest. Surely not! — You've waited to discuss that matter so many years and now it can't wait one more day? You know me — I'm not pretending.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

So I am right! Well, well . . .

[*He gets up and walks about.*

LOTH

What are you right about?

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

[*Standing still before* LOTH *and looking straight into his eyes.*] So there is really something between you and Helen Krause?

LOTH

Who said —?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

How in the world did you fall in with this family?

Loth

How do you know that, Schimmel?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

It wasn't *so* hard to guess.

Loth

Well then, for heaven's sake, don't say a word, because . . .

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

So you're quite regularly betrothed?

Loth

Call it that. At all events, we're agreed.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

But what I want to know is: how did you fall in with this particular family?

Loth

Hoffmann's an old college friend of mine. Then, too, he was a member — though only a corresponding one — of my colonisation society.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

I heard about that business at Zuerich.— So he was associated with you. That explains the wretched half-and-half creature that he is.

LOTH

That describes him, no doubt.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

He isn't even *that,* really.— But, look here, Loth! Is that your honest intention? I mean this thing with the Krause girl.

LOTH

Of course it is! Can you doubt it? You don't think me such a scoundrel —?

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

Very well! Don't exert yourself! You've probably changed in all this long time. And why not? It needn't be entirely a disadvantage. A little bit of humour couldn't harm you. I don't see why one must look at all things in that damnably serious way.

LOTH

I take things more seriously than ever. [*He gets up and walks up and down with* SCHIMMELPFENNIG, *always keeping slightly behind the latter.*] You can't possibly know, and I can't possibly explain to you, what this thing means to me.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

Hm!

LOTH

Man, you have no notion of the condition I'm in. One doesn't know it by simply longing for it. If one did, one would simply go mad with yearning.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Let the devil try to understand how you fellows come by this senseless yearning.

Loth

You're not safe against an attack yourself yet.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

I'd like to see that!

Loth

You talk as a blind man would of colour.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

I wouldn't give a farthing for that bit of intoxication. Ridiculous! And to build a life-long union on such a foundation. I'd rather trust a heap of shifting sand.

Loth

Intoxication! Pshaw! To call it that is simply to show your utter blindness to it. Intoxication is fleeting. I've had such spells, I admit. This happens to be something different.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Hm!

Loth

I'm perfectly sober all through it. Do you imagine that I surround my darling with a kind of a — well, how shall I put it — a kind of an

aureole? Not in the least. She has her faults; she isn't remarkably beautiful, at least — well, she's certainly not exactly homely either. Judging her quite objectively — of course it's entirely a matter of taste — I haven't seen such a sweet girl before in my life. So when you talk of mere intoxication — nonsense! I am as sober as possible. But, my friend, this is the remarkable thing: I simply can't imagine myself without her any longer. It seems to me like an amalgam, as when two metals are so intimately welded together that you can't say any longer, here's the one, there's the other. And it all seems so utterly inevitable. In short — maybe I'm talking rot — or what I say may seem rot to you, but so much is certain: a man who doesn't know *that* is a kind of cool-blooded fishy creature. That's the kind of creature I was up till now, and that's the kind of wretched thing you are still.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

That's a very complete set of symptoms. Queer how you fellows always slide up to the very ears into the particular things that you've long ago rejected theoretically — like yourself into marriage. As long as I've known you, you've struggled with this unhappy mania for marriage.

LOTH

It's instinct with me, sheer instinct. God knows, I can wriggle all I please — there it is.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

When all's said and done one can fight down even an instinct.

LOTH

Certainly, if there's a good reason, why not?

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

Is there any good reason for marrying?

LOTH

I should say there is. It has a purpose; it has for me! You don't know how I've succeeded in struggling along hitherto. I don't want to grow sentimental. Perhaps I didn't feel it quite so keenly either; perhaps I wasn't so clearly conscious of it as I am now, that in all my endeavour I had taken on something desolate, something machine-like. No spirit, no fire, no life! Heaven knows whether I had any faith left! And all that has come back to me to-day — with such strange fullness, such primal energy, such joy . . . Pshaw, what's the use . . . You don't understand.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

The various things you fellows need to keep you going — faith, love, hope. I consider all that trash. The thing is simply this: humanity lies in its death throes and we're merely trying to make the agony as bearable as we can by administering narcotics.

LOTH

Is that your latest point of view?

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

It's five or six years old by this time and I see no reason to change it.

LOTH

I congratulate you on it.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

Thank you.

A long pause ensues.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

[*After several disquieted and unsuccessful beginnings.*] The trouble is just this. I feel that I'm responsible . . . I absolutely owe you an elucidation. I don't believe that you will be able to marry Helen Krause.

LOTH

[*Frigidly.*] Oh, is that what you think?

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

Yes, that's my opinion. There are obstacles present which just you would . . .

LOTH

Look here! Don't for heaven's sake have any scruples on that account. The conditions, as a matter of fact, aren't so complicated as all that. At bottom they're really terribly simple.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

Simply terrible, you'd better say.

LOTH

I was referring simply to the obstacles.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

So was I, very largely. But take it all in all, I can't imagine that you really know the conditions as they are.

Loth

Please, Schimmel, express yourself more clearly.

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

You must absolutely have dropped the chief demand which you used to make in regard to marriage, although you did give me to understand that you laid as much weight as ever on the propagation of a race sound in mind and body.

Loth

Dropped my demand . . .? Dropped it? But why should I?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

I see. Then there's nothing else left me but to . . . Then you don't know the conditions here. You do not know, for instance, that Hoffmann had a son who perished through alcoholism at the age of three.

Loth

Wha . . . what d'you say?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

I'm sorry, Loth, but I've got to tell you. You can do afterward as you please. But the thing was no joke. They were visiting here just as they

are now. They sent for me — half an hour too late. The little fellow had bled to death long before I arrived.

Loth *drinks in the* Doctor's *words with every evidence of profound and terrible emotion.*

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

The silly little chap grabbed for the vinegar bottle, thinking his beloved rum was in it. The bottle fell and the child tumbled on the broken glass. Down here, you see, the *vena saphena,* was completely severed.

Loth

Whose, *whose* child was that?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

The child of Hoffmann and of the same woman who again, up there . . . And she drinks too, drinks to the point of unconsciousness, drinks whatever she can get hold of!

Loth

So it's not, it's not inherited from Hoffmann?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Not at all. That's the tragic aspect of the man! He suffers under it as much as he is capable of suffering. To be sure, he knew that he was marrying into a family of dipsomaniacs. The old farmer simply spends his life in the tavern.

LOTH

Then, to be sure — I understand many things — No, everything, rather . . . everything! [*After a heavy silence.*] Then her life here, Helen's life, is a . . . how shall I express it? I have no words for it; it's . . .

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

Utterly horrible. I can judge of that. And I understood from the beginning how you should cling to her. But, as I said . . .

LOTH

It's enough. I understand . . . But doesn't . . .? Couldn't one perhaps persuade Hoffmann to do something? She ought to be removed from all this foulness.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

Hoffmann?

LOTH

Yes, Hoffmann.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

You don't know him. I don't believe that he has ruined her already, but he has ruined her reputation even now.

LOTH

[*Flaring up.*] If that's true, I'll murder . . .! Do you really believe that? Do you think Hoffmann capable . . .?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

Of anything! I think him capable of anything that might contribute to his own pleasure.

Loth

Then she is — the purest creature that ever breathed . . .

Loth *slowly takes up his hat and cane and hangs his wallet over his shoulder.*

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

What do you think of doing, Loth?

Loth

. . . I mustn't meet her . . .

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

So you're determined?

Loth

Determined to what?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

To break the connection.

Loth

How is it possible for me to be other than determined?

Dr. Schimmelpfennig

I may add, as a physician, that cases are known in which such inherited evils have been suppressed.

And of course you would give your children a rational up-bringing.

LOTH

Such cases may be known.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

And the chances are not so small but that . . .

LOTH

That kind of thing can't help me, Schimmel. There are just three possibilities in this affair: Either I marry her and then . . . no, that way out simply doesn't exist. Or — the traditional bullet. Of course, that would mean rest, at least. But we haven't reached that point yet awhile; can't indulge in that luxury just yet. And so: live! fight! — Farther, farther! [*His glance falls on the table and he observes the writing-materials that have been placed there by* EDWARD. *He sits down, hesitates and says:*] And yet . . .?

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

I promise you that I'll represent the situation to her as clearly as possible.

LOTH

Yes, yes! You see — I can't do differently. [*He writes, places his paper in an envelope and addresses it. Then he arises and shakes hands with* SCHIMMELPFENNIG.] For the rest — I depend on you.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

You're coming over to my house, aren't you? Let my coachman drive you right over.

LOTH

Look here! Oughtn't one to try, at least, to get her out of the power of this . . . this person? . . . As things are she is sure to become his victim.

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

My dear, good fellow! I'm sorry for you. But shall I give you a bit of advice? Don't rob her of the — little that you still leave her.

LOTH

[*With a deep sigh.*] Maybe you're right — perhaps certainly.

Hasty steps are heard descending the stairs. In the next moment HOFFMANN *rushes in.*

HOFFMANN

Doctor, I beg you, for heaven's sake . . . she is fainting . . . the pains have stopped . . . won't you at last . . .

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

I'm coming up. [*To* LOTH *significantly.*] We'll see each other later. Mr. Hoffmann, I must request you . . . any interference or disturbance might prove fatal . . . I would much prefer to have you stay here.

HOFFMANN

You ask a great deal, but . . . well!

DR. SCHIMMELPFENNIG

No more than is right. [*He goes.*

HOFFMANN *remains behind.*

HOFFMANN

[*Observing* LOTH.] I'm just trembling in every limb from the excitement. Tell me, are you leaving?

LOTH

Yes.

HOFFMANN

Now in the middle of the night?

LOTH

I'm only going as far as Schimmelpfennig's.

HOFFMANN

Ah, yes. Well . . . as things have shaped themselves, it's of course no pleasure staying with us any longer . . . So, good luck!

LOTH

I thank you for your hospitality.

HOFFMANN

And how about that plan of yours?

LOTH

What plan?

HOFFMANN

I mean that essay of yours, that economic description of our district. I ought to say . . . in fact, as a friend, I would beg of you as insistently as possible . . .

LOTH

Don't worry about that any more. I'll be far away from here by to-morrow.

HOFFMANN

That is really — [*He interrupts himself.*

LOTH

Kind of you, you were going to say.

HOFFMANN

Oh, I don't know. Well, in a certain respect, yes! And anyhow you must forgive me; I'm so frightfully upset. Just count on me. Old friends are always the best! Good-bye, good-bye.

[*He leaves through the middle door.*

LOTH

[*Before going to the door, turns around once more with a long glance as if to imprint the whole room on his memory. Then to himself:*] I suppose I can go now . . .

[*After a last glance he leaves.*

The room remains empty for some seconds. The sound of muffled voices and the noise of footfalls is heard. Then Hoffmann *appears. As soon as he has closed the door behind him, he takes out his note-book and runs over some account with exaggerated calm. He interrupts himself, listens, becomes restless again, advances to the door and listens there. Suddenly some one runs down the stair and* Helen *bursts in.*

Helen

[*Still without.*] Brother! [*At the door.*] Brother!

Hoffmann

What's the *matter?*

Helen

Be brave: still-born!

Hoffmann

O my God! [*He rushes out.*

Helen *alone.*

She looks about her and calls softly: Alfred! Alfred! *As she receives no answer, she calls out again more quickly:* Alfred! Alfred! *She has hurried to the door of the conservatory through which she gazes anxiously. She goes into the conservatory, but reappears shortly.* Alfred! *Her disquiet increases. She peers out of the window.* Alfred! *She opens the win-*

dow and mounts a chair that stands before it. At this moment there resounds clearly from the yard the shouting of the drunken farmer, her father, who is coming home from the inn. Hay — hee! Ain' I a han'some feller? Ain' I got a fine-lookin' wife? Ain' I got a couple o' han'some gals? Hay — hee! Helen *utters a short cry and runs, like a hunted creature, toward the middle door. From there she discovers the letter which* Loth *has left lying on the table. She runs to it, tears it open, feverishly takes in the contents, of which she audibly utters separate words.* "Insuperable!" . . . "Never again." . . . *She lets the letter fall and sways.* It's over! *She steadies herself, holds her head with both hands, and cries out in brief and piercing despair.* It's over! *She rushes out through the middle door. The farmer's voice without, drawing nearer.* Hay — hee! Ain' the farm mine? Ain' I got a han'some wife? Ain' I a han'some feller? Helen, *still seeking* Loth *half-madly, comes from the conservatory and meets* Edward, *who has come to fetch something from* Hoffmann's *room. She addresses him:* Edward! *He answers:* Yes, Miss Krause. *She continues:* I'd like to . . . like to . . . Dr. Loth . . . Edward *answers:* Dr. Loth drove away in Dr. Schimmelpfennig's carriage. *He disappears into* Hoffmann's *room.* True! Helen *cries out and holds herself erect with difficulty. In the next moment a desperate energy takes hold of her. She runs to the foreground and seizes the hunting knife with its belt which*

is fastened to the stag's antlers above the sofa. She hides the weapon and stays quietly in the dark foreground until Edward, *coming from* Hoffmann's *room, has disappeared through the middle door. The farmer's voice resounds more clearly from moment to moment.* Hay — hee! Ain' I a han'some feller? *At this sound, as at a signal,* Helen *starts and runs, in her turn, into* Hoffmann's *room. The main room is empty but one continues to hear the farmer's voice:* Ain' I got the finest teeth? Ain' I got a fine farm? Miele *comes through the middle door and looks searchingly about. She calls:* Miss Helen! Miss Helen! *Meanwhile the farmer's voice:* The money 'sh mi-ine! *Without further hesitation* Miele *has disappeared into* Hoffmann's *room, the door of which she leaves open. In the next moment she rushes out with every sign of insane terror. Screaming she spins around twice — thrice — screaming she flies through the middle door. Her uninterrupted screaming, softening as it recedes, is audible for several seconds. Last there is heard the opening and resonant slamming of the heavy house door, the tread of the farmer stumbling about in the hall, and his coarse, nasal, thick-tongued drunkard's voice echoes through the room:* Hay-hee! Ain' I got a couple o' han'some gals?

CURTAIN

THE WEAVERS

I DEDICATE THIS DRAMA

TO MY FATHER

ROBERT HAUPTMANN.

You, dear father, know what feelings lead me to dedicate this work to you, and I am not called upon to analyse them here.

Your stories of my grandfather, who in his young days sat at the loom, a poor weaver like those here depicted, contained the germ of my drama. Whether it possesses the vigour of life or is rotten at the core, it is the best, "so poor a man as Hamlet is" can offer.

Your

GERHART

COMPLETE LIST OF CHARACTERS

DREISSIGER, *fustian manufacturer.*
MRS. DREISSIGER.
PFEIFER, *manager* } *in* DREISSIGER'S *employment.*
NEUMANN, *cashier* } *in* DREISSIGER'S *employment.*
AN APPRENTICE } *in* DREISSIGER'S *employment.*
JOHN, *coachman* } *in* DREISSIGER'S *employment.*
A MAID } *in* DREISSIGER'S *employment.*
WEINHOLD, *tutor to* DREISSIGER'S *sons.*
PASTOR KITTELHAUS.
MRS. KITTELHAUS.
HEIDE, *Police Superintendent.*
KUTSCHE, *policeman.*
WELZEL, *publican.*
MRS. WELZEL.
ANNA WELZEL.
WIEGAND, *joiner.*
A COMMERCIAL TRAVELLER.
A PEASANT.
A FORESTER.
SCHMIDT, *surgeon.*
HORNIG, *rag dealer.*
WITTIG, *smith.*

WEAVERS.

BECKER.
MORITZ JAEGER.
OLD BAUMERT.
MOTHER BAUMERT.
BERTHA } BAUMERT.
EMMA } BAUMERT.
FRITZ, EMMA'S *son (four years old).*
AUGUST BAUMERT.
OLD ANSORGE.
MRS. HEINRICH.
OLD HILSE.
MOTHER HILSE.
GOTTLIEB HILSE.
LUISE, GOTTLIEB'S *wife.*
MIELCHEN, *their daughter (six years old).*
REIMANN, *weaver.*

WEAVERS — continued

HEIBER, *weaver.*
A WEAVER'S WIFE.

A number of weavers, young and old, of both sexes.

The action passes in the Forties, at Kaschbach, Peterswaldau and Langenbielau, in the Eulengebirge.

THE FIRST ACT

A large whitewashed room on the ground floor of DREISSIGER'S *house at Peterswaldau, where the weavers deliver their finished webs and the fustian is stored. To the left are uncurtained windows, in the back wall there is a glass door, and to the right another glass door, through which weavers, male and female, and children, are passing in and out. All three walls are lined with shelves for the storing of the fustian. Against the right wall stands a long bench, on which a number of weavers have already spread out their cloth. In the order of arrival each presents his piece to be examined by* PFEIFER, DREISSIGER'S *manager, who stands, with compass and magnifying-glass, behind a large table, on which the web to be inspected is laid. When* PFEIFER *has satisfied himself, the weaver lays the fustian on the scale, and an office apprentice tests its weight. The same boy stores the accepted pieces on the shelves.* PFEIFER *calls out the payment due in each case to* NEUMANN, *the cashier, who is seated at a small table.*

It is a sultry day towards the end of May. The clock is on the stroke of twelve. Most of the waiting work-people have the air of standing before the bar of justice, in torturing expecta-

tion of a decision that means life or death to them. They are marked too by the anxious timidity characteristic of the receiver of charity, who has suffered many humiliations, and, conscious that he is barely tolerated, has acquired the habit of self-effacement. Add to this a rigid expression on every face that tells of constant, fruitless brooding. There is a general resemblance among the men. They have something about them of the dwarf, something of the schoolmaster. The majority are flat-breasted, short-winded, sallow, and poor looking — creatures of the loom, their knees bent with much sitting. At a first glance the women show fewer typical traits. They look over-driven, worried, reckless, whereas the men still make some show of a pitiful self-respect; and their clothes are ragged, while the men's are patched and mended. Some of the young girls are not without a certain charm, consisting in a wax-like pallor, a slender figure, and large, projecting, melancholy eyes.

NEUMANN

[*Counting out money.*] Comes to one and sevenpence halfpenny.

WEAVER'S WIFE

[*About thirty, emaciated, takes up the money with trembling fingers.*] Thank you, sir.

NEUMANN

[*Seeing that she does not move on.*] Well, something wrong this time, too?

WEAVER'S WIFE

[*Agitated, imploringly.*] Do you think I might have a few pence in advance, sir? I need it that bad.

NEUMANN

And I need a few pounds. If it was only a question of needing it — ! [*Already occupied in counting out another weaver's money, gruffly.*] It's Mr. Dreissiger who settles about pay in advance.

WEAVER'S WIFE

Couldn't I speak to Mr. Dreissiger himself, then, sir?

PFEIFER

[*Now manager, formerly weaver. The type is unmistakable, only he is well fed, well dressed, clean shaven; also takes snuff copiously. He calls out roughly.*] Mr. Dreissiger would have enough to do if he had to attend to every trifle himself. That's what we are here for. [*He measures, and then examines through the magnifying-glass.*] Mercy on us! what a draught! [*Puts a thick muffler round his neck.*] Shut the door, whoever comes in.

APPRENTICE

[*Loudly to* PFEIFER.] You might as well talk to stocks and stones.

PFEIFER

That's done! — Weigh! [*The weaver places his web on the scales.*] If you only understood your

business a little better! Full of lumps again. . . . I hardly need to look at the cloth to see them. Call yourself a weaver, and "draw as long a bow" as you've done there!

Becker *has entered. A young, exceptionally powerfully-built weaver; offhand, almost bold in manner.* Pfeifer, Neumann, *and the* Apprentice *exchange looks of mutual understanding as he comes in.*

Becker

Devil take it! This is a sweatin' job, and no mistake.

First Weaver

[*In a low voice.*] This blazin' heat means rain.

[Old Baumert *forces his way in at the glass door on the right, through which the crowd of weavers can be seen, standing shoulder to shoulder, waiting their turn. The old man stumbles forward and lays his bundle on the bench, beside* Becker's. *He sits down by it, and wipes the sweat from his face.*

Old Baumert

A man has a right to a rest after that.

Becker

Rest's better than money.

Old Baumert

Yes, but we *needs* the money too. Good mornin' to you, Becker!

BECKER

Mornin', father Baumert! Goodness knows how long we'll have to stand here again.

FIRST WEAVER

That don't matter. What's to hinder a weaver waitin' for an hour, or for a day? What else is he there for?

PFEIFER

Silence there! We can't hear our own voices.

BECKER

[*In a low voice.*] This is one of his bad days.

PFEIFER

[*To the weaver standing before him.*] How often have I told you that you must bring cleaner cloth? What sort of mess is this? Knots, and straw, and all kinds of dirt.

REIMANN

It's for want of a new picker, sir.

APPRENTICE

[*Has weighed the piece.*] Short weight, too.

PFEIFER

I never saw such weavers. I hate to give out the yarn to them. It was another story in my day! I'd have caught it finely from my master for work like that. The business was carried on

in different style then. A man had to know his trade — that's the last thing that's thought of nowadays. Reimann, one shilling.

REIMANN

But there's always a pound allowed for waste.

PFEIFER

I've no time. Next man! — What have you to show?

HEIBER

[*Lays his web on the table. While* PFEIFER *is examining it, he goes close up to him; eagerly in a low tone.*] Beg pardon, Mr. Pfeifer, but I wanted to ask you, sir, if you would perhaps be so very kind an' do me the favour an' not take my advance money off this week's pay.

PFEIFER

[*Measuring and examining the texture; jeeringly.*] Well! What next, I wonder? This looks very much as if half the weft had stuck to the bobbins again.

HEIBER

[*Continues.*] I'll be sure to make it all right next week, sir. But this last week I've had to put in two days' work on the estate. And my missus is ill in bed. . . .

PFEIFER

[*Giving the web to be weighed.*] Another piece of real slop-work. [*Already examining a new*

web.] What a selvage! Here it's broad, there it's narrow; here it's drawn in by the wefts goodness knows how tight, and there it's torn out again by the temples. And hardly seventy threads weft to the inch. What's come of the rest? Do you call this honest work? I never saw anything like it.

[Heiber, *repressing tears, stands humiliated and helpless.*

Becker

[*In a low voice to* Baumert.] To please that brute you'd have to pay for extra yarn out o' your own pocket.

Weaver's Wife

[*Who has remained standing near the cashier's table, from time to time looking round appealingly, takes courage and once more turns imploringly to the cashier.*] I don't know what's to come o' me, sir, if you won't give me a little advance this time . . . O Lord, O Lord!

Pfeifer

[*Calls across.*] It's no good whining, or dragging the Lord's name into the matter. You're not so anxious about Him at other times. You look after your husband and see that he's not to be found so often lounging in the public-house. We can give no pay in advance. We have to account for every penny. It's not our money. People that are industrious, and understand their work, and do it in the fear of God, never need their pay in advance. So now you know.

NEUMANN

If a Bielau weaver got four times as much pay, he would squander it four times over and be in debt into the bargain.

WEAVER'S WIFE

[*In a loud voice, as if appealing to the general sense of justice.*] No one can't call me idle, but I'm not fit now for what I once was. I've twice had a miscarriage. And as to John, he's but a poor creature. He's been to the shepherd at Zerlau, but he couldn't do him no good, and . . . you can't do more than you've strength for. . . . We works as hard as ever we can. This many a week I've been at it till far on into the night. An' we'll keep our heads above water right enough if I can just get a bit o' strength into me. But you must have pity on us, Mr. Pfeifer, sir. [*Eagerly, coaxingly.*] You'll please be so very kind as to let me have a few pence on the next job, sir?

PFEIFER

[*Paying no attention.*] Fiedler, one and twopence.

WEAVER'S WIFE

Only a few pence, to buy bread with. We can't get no more credit. We've a lot o' little ones.

NEUMANN

[*Half aside to the* APPRENTICE, *in a serio-comic tone.*] "Every year brings a child to the linen-weaver's wife, heigh-ho, heigh-ho, heigh."

APPRENTICE

[*Takes up the rhyme, half singing.*] "And the little brat it's blind the first weeks of its life, heigh-ho, heigh-ho, heigh."

REIMANN

[*Not touching the money which the cashier has counted out to him.*] We've always got one and fourpence for the web.

PFEIFER

[*Calls across.*] If our terms don't suit you, Reimann, you have only to say so. There's no scarcity of weavers — especially of your sort. For full weight we give full pay.

REIMANN

How anything can be wrong with the weight o' this . . .!

PFEIFER

You bring a piece of fustian with no faults in it, and there will be no fault in the pay.

REIMANN

It's clean impossible that there's too many knots in this web.

PFEIFER

[*Examining.*] If you want to live well, then be sure you weave well.

HEIBER

[*Has remained standing near* PFEIFER, *so as to seize on any favourable opportunity. He laughs at* PFEIFER'S *little witticism, then steps forward and again addresses him.*] I wanted to ask you, sir, if you would perhaps have the great kindness not to take my advance of sixpence off to-day's pay? My missus has been bedridden since February. She can't do a hand's turn for me, an' I've to pay a bobbin girl. An' so . . .

PFEIFER

[*Takes a pinch of snuff.*] Heiber, do you think I have no one to attend to but you? The others must have their turn.

REIMANN

As the warp was given me I took it home and fastened it to the beam. I can't bring back no better yarn than I gets.

PFEIFER

If you're not satisfied, you need come for no more. There are plenty ready to tramp the soles off their shoes to get it.

NEUMANN

[*To* REIMANN.] Don't you want your money?

REIMANN

I can't bring myself to take such pay.

NEUMANN

[*Paying no further attention to* REIMANN.] Heiber, one shilling. Deduct sixpence for pay in advance. Leaves sixpence.

HEIBER

[*Goes up to the table, looks at the money, stands shaking his head as if unable to believe his eyes, then slowly takes it up.*] Well, I never! —— [*Sighing.*] Oh dear, oh dear!

OLD BAUMERT

[*Looking into* HEIBER'S *face.*] Yes, Franz, that's so! There's matter enough for sighing.

HEIBER

[*Speaking with difficulty.*] I've a girl lyin' sick at home too, an' she needs a bottle of medicine.

OLD BAUMERT

What's wrong with her?

HEIBER

Well, you see, she's always been a sickly bit of a thing. I don't know . . . I needn't mind tellin' you — she brought her trouble with her. It's in her blood, and it breaks out here, there, and everywhere.

OLD BAUMERT

It's always the way. Let folks be poor, and one trouble comes to them on the top of another. There's no help for it and there's no end to it.

HEIBER

What are you carryin' in that cloth, father, Baumert?

OLD BAUMERT

We haven't so much as a bite in the house, and so I've had the little dog killed. There's not much on him, for the poor beast was half starved. A nice little dog he was! I couldn't kill him myself. I hadn't the heart to do it.

PFEIFER

[*Has inspected* BECKER'S *web and calls.*] Becker, one and threepence.

BECKER

That's what you might give to a beggar; it's not pay.

PFEIFER

Every one who has been attended to must clear out. We haven't room to turn round in.

BECKER

[*To those standing near, without lowering his voice.*] It's a beggarly pittance, nothing else. A man works his treadle from early morning till late at night, an' when he's bent over his loom for days an' days, tired to death every evening, sick with the dust and the heat, he finds he's made a beggarly one and threepence!

PFEIFER

No impudence allowed here.

BECKER

If you think I'll hold my tongue for your tellin', you're much mistaken.

PFEIFER

[*Exclaims.*] We'll see about that! [*Rushes to the glass door and calls into the office.*] Mr. Dreissiger, Mr. Dreissiger, will you be good enough to come here?

Enter DREISSIGER. *About forty, full-bodied, asthmatic. Looks severe.*

DREISSIGER

What is it, Pfeifer?

PFEIFER

[*Spitefully.*] Becker says he won't be told to hold his tongue.

DREISSIGER

[*Draws himself up, throws back his head, stares at* BECKER; *his nostrils tremble.*] Oh, indeed! — Becker. [*To* PFEIFER.] Is he the man? . . .

[*The clerks nod.*

BECKER

[*Insolently.*] Yes, Mr. Dreissiger, yes! [*Pointing to himself.*] This is the man. [*Pointing to* DREISSIGER.] And that's a man too!

DREISSIGER

[*Angrily.*] Fellow, how dare you?

PFEIFER

He's too well off. He'll go dancing on the ice once too often, though.

BECKER

[*Recklessly.*] You shut up, you Jack-in-the-box. Your mother must have gone dancing once too often with Satan to have got such a devil for a son.

DREISSIGER

[*Now in a violent passion, roars.*] Hold your tongue this moment, sir, or . . .

[*He trembles and takes a few steps forward.*

BECKER

[*Holding his ground steadily.*] I'm not deaf. My hearing's quite good yet.

DREISSIGER

[*Controls himself, asks in an apparently cool business tone.*] Was this fellow not one of the pack . . .?

PFEIFER

He's a Bielau weaver. When there's any mischief going, they're sure to be in it.

DREISSIGER

[*Trembling.*] Well, I give you all warning: if the same thing happens again as last night — a troop of half-drunken cubs marching past my windows singing that low song . . .

BECKER

Is it " Bloody Justice " you mean?

DREISSIGER

You know well enough what I mean. I tell you that if I hear it again I'll get hold of one of you, and — mind, I'm not joking — before the justice he shall go. And if I can find out who it was that made up that vile doggerel . . .

BECKER

It's a grand song, that's what it is!

DREISSIGER

Another word and I send for the police on the spot, without more ado. I'll make short work with you young fellows. I've got the better of very different men before now.

BECKER

I believe you there. A real thoroughbred manufacturer will get the better of two or three hundred weavers in the time it takes you to turn round — swallow 'em up, and not leave as much as a bone. He's got four stomachs like a cow, and teeth like a wolf. That's nothing to him at all!

DREISSIGER

[*To his clerks.*] That man gets no more work from us.

BECKER

It's all the same to me whether I starve at my loom or by the roadside.

DREISSIGER

Out you go, then, this moment!

BECKER

[*Determinedly.*] Not without my pay.

DREISSIGER

How much is owing to the fellow, Neumann?

NEUMANN

One and threepence.

DREISSIGER

[*Takes the money hurriedly out of the cashier's hand, and flings it on the table, so that some of the coins roll off on to the floor.*] There you are, then; and now, out of my sight with you!

BECKER

Not without my pay.

DREISSIGER

Don't you see it lying there? If you don't take it and go . . . It's exactly twelve now . . . The dyers are coming out for their dinner . . .

BECKER

I gets my pay into my hand — here — that's where!

[*Points with the fingers of his right hand at the palm of his left.*

DREISSIGER

[*To the* APPRENTICE.] Pick up the money, Tilgner.

[*The* APPRENTICE *lifts the money and puts it into* BECKER'S *hand.*

BECKER

Everything in proper order.

[*Deliberately takes an old purse out of his pocket and puts the money into it.*

DREISSIGER

[*As* BECKER *still does not move away.*] Well? Do you want me to come and help you?

[*Signs of agitation are observable among the crowd of weavers. A long, loud sigh is heard, and then a fall. General interest is at once diverted to this new event.*

DREISSIGER

What's the matter there?

CHORUS OF WEAVERS AND WOMEN

"Some one's fainted."—"It's a little sickly boy."—"Is it a fit, or what?

Dreissiger

What do you say? Fainted? [*He goes nearer.*

Old Weaver

There he lies, any way.

[*They make room. A boy of about eight is seen lying on the floor as if dead.*

Dreissiger

Does any one know the boy?

Old Weaver

He's not from our village.

Old Baumert

He's like one of weaver Heinrich's boys. [*Looks at him more closely.*] Yes, that's Heinrich's little Philip.

Dreissiger

Where do they live?

Old Baumert

Up near us in Kaschbach, sir. He goes round playin' music in the evenings, and all day he's at the loom. They've nine children an' a tenth a coming.

Chorus of Weavers and Women

"They're terrible put to it."—"The rain comes through their roof."—"The woman hasn't two shirts among the nine."

Old Baumert

[*Taking the boy by the arm.*] Now then, lad, what's wrong with you? Wake up, lad.

Dreissiger

Some of you help me, and we'll get him up. It's disgraceful to send a sickly child this distance. Bring some water, Pfeifer.

Woman

[*Helping to lift the boy.*] Sure you're not goin' to be foolish and die, lad!

Dreissiger

Brandy, Pfeifer, brandy will be better.

Becker

[*Forgotten by all, has stood looking on. With his hand on the door-latch, he now calls loudly and tauntingly.*] Give him something to eat, an' he'll soon be all right. [*Goes out.*

Dreissiger

That fellow will come to a bad end.— Take him under the arm, Neumann. Easy now, easy; we'll get him into my room. What?

Neumann

He said something, Mr. Dreissiger. His lips are moving.

Dreissiger

What — what is it, boy?

Boy

[*Whispers.*] I'm h—hungry.

Woman

I think he says —

Dreissiger

We'll find out. Don't stop. Let us get him into my room. He can lie on the sofa there. We'll hear what the doctor says.

[Dreissiger, Neumann, *and the woman lead the boy into the office. The weavers begin to behave like school-children when their master has left the class-room. They stretch themselves, whisper, move from one foot to the other, and in the course of a few moments are conversing loudly.*

Old Baumert

I believe as how Becker was right.

Chorus of Weavers and Women

"He did say something like that."—"It's nothin' new here to fall down from hunger."—"God knows what's to come of 'em in winter if this cuttin' down o' wages goes on."—"An' this year the potatoes aren't no good at all."—"Things'll get worse and worse till we're all done for together."

Old Baumert

The best thing a man could do would be to put a rope round his neck and hang hisself on his

own loom, like weaver Nentwich. [*To another old weaver.*] Here, take a pinch. I was at Neurode yesterday. My brother-in-law, he works in the snuff factory there, and he give me a grain or two. Have you anything good in your kerchief?

Old Weaver

Only a little pearl barley. I was coming along behind Ulbrich the miller's cart, and there was a slit in one of the sacks. I can tell you we'll be glad of it.

Old Baumert

There's twenty-two mills in Peterswaldau, but of all they grind, there's never nothin' comes our way.

Old Weaver

We must keep up heart. There's always somethin' comes to help us on again.

Heiber

Yes, when we're hungry, we can pray to all the saints to help us, and if that don't fill our bellies we can put a pebble in our mouths and suck it. Eh, Baumert?

Re-enter Dreissiger, Pfeifer, and Neumann.

Dreissiger

It was nothing serious. The boy is all right again. [*Walks about excitedly, panting.*] But all the same it's a disgrace. The child's so weak that a puff of wind would blow him over. How people, how any parents can be so thoughtless is what

passes my comprehension. Loading him with two heavy pieces of fustian to carry six good miles! No one would believe it that hadn't seen it. It simply means that I shall have to make a rule that no goods brought by children will be taken over. [*He walks up and down silently for a few moments.*] I sincerely trust such a thing will not occur again.— Who gets all the blame for it? Why, of course the manufacturer. It's entirely our fault. If some poor little fellow sticks in the snow in winter and goes to sleep, a special correspondent arrives post-haste, and in two days we have a blood-curdling story served up in all the papers. Is any blame laid on the father, the parents, that send such a child? — Not a bit of it. How should they be to blame? It's all the manufacturer's fault — he's made the scapegoat. They flatter the weaver, and give the manufacturer nothing but abuse — he's a cruel man, with a heart like a stone, a dangerous fellow, at whose calves every cur of a journalist may take a bite. He lives on the fat of the land, and pays the poor weavers starvation wages. In the flow of his eloquence the writer forgets to mention that such a man has his cares too and his sleepless nights; that he runs risks of which the workman never dreams; that he is often driven distracted by all the calculations he has to make, and all the different things he has to take into account; that he has to struggle for his very life against competition; and that no day passes without some annoyance or some loss. And think of the manufacturer's responsibilities, think of the numbers that depend on him, that look to him for their daily bread. No, No! none of you need wish yourselves in my

shoes — you would soon have enough of it. [*After a moment's reflection.*] You all saw how that fellow, that scoundrel Becker, behaved. Now he'll go and spread about all sorts of tales of my hard-heartedness, of how my weavers are turned off for a mere trifle, without a moment's notice. Is that true? Am I so very unmerciful?

CHORUS OF VOICES

No, sir.

DREISSIGER

It doesn't seem to me that I am. And yet these ne'er-do-wells come round singing low songs about us manufacturers — prating about hunger, with enough in their pockets to pay for quarts of bad brandy. If they would like to know what want is, let them go and ask the linen-weavers: they can tell something about it. But you here, you fustian-weavers, have every reason to thank God that things are no worse than they are. And I put it to all the old, industrious weavers present: Is a good workman able to gain a living in my employment, or is he not?

MANY VOICES

Yes, sir; he is, sir.

DREISSIGER

There now! You see! Of course such a fellow as that Becker can't. I advise you to keep these young lads in check. If there's much more of this sort of thing, I'll shut up shop — give up the business altogether, and then you can shift for

yourselves, get work where you like — perhaps Mr. Becker will provide it.

First Weaver's Wife

[*Has come close to* Dreissiger, *and removes a little dust from his coat with creeping servility.*] You've been an' rubbed agin something, sir.

Dreissiger

Business is as bad as it can be just now, you know that yourselves. Instead of making money, I am losing it every day. If, in spite of this, I take care that my weavers are kept in work, I look for some little gratitude from them. I have thousands of pieces of cloth in stock, and don't know if I'll ever be able to sell them. Well, now, I've heard how many weavers hereabouts are out of work, and — I'll leave Pfeifer to give the particulars — but this much I'll tell you, just to show you my good will. . . . I can't deal out charity all round; I'm not rich enough for that; but I can give the people who are out of work the chance of earning at any rate a little. It's a great business risk I run by doing it, but that's my affair. I say to myself: Better that a man should work for a bite of bread than that he should starve altogether. Am I not right?

Chorus of Voices

Yes, yes, sir.

Dreissiger

And therefore I am ready to give employment to two hundred more weavers. Pfeifer will tell you on what conditions. [*He turns to go.*

First Weaver's Wife

[*Comes between him and the door, speaks hurriedly, eagerly, imploringly.*] Oh, if you please, sir, will you let me ask you if you'll be so good . . . I've been twice laid up for . . .

Dreissiger

[*Hastily.*] Speak to Pfeifer, good woman. I'm too late as it is. [*Passes on, leaving her standing.*

Reimann

[*Stops him again. In an injured, complaining tone.*] I have a complaint to make, if you please, sir. Mr. Pfeifer refuses to . . . I've always got one and two-pence for a web . . .

Dreissiger

[*Interrupts him.*] Mr. Pfeifer's my manager. There he is. Apply to him.

Heiber

[*Detaining* Dreissiger; *hurriedly and confusedly.*] O sir, I wanted to ask if you would p'r'aps, if I might p'r'aps . . . if Mr. Pfeifer might . . . might . . .

Dreissiger

What is it you want?

Heiber

That advance pay I had last time, sir; I thought p'r'aps you would kindly . . .

DREISSIGER

I have no idea what you are talking about.

HEIBER

I'm awful hard up, sir, because . . .

DREISSIGER

These are things Pfeifer must look into — I really have not the time. Arrange the matter with Pfeifer. [*He escapes into the office.*

[*The supplicants look helplessly at one another, sigh, and take their places again among the others.*

PFEIFER

[*Resuming his task of inspection.*] Well, Annie, let us see what yours is like.

OLD BAUMERT

How much is we to get for the web, then, Mr. Pfeifer?

PFEIFER

One shilling a web.

OLD BAUMERT

Has it come to that!

[*Excited whispering and murmuring among the weavers.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT

THE SECOND ACT

A small room in the house of WILHELM ANSORGE, *weaver and cottager in the village of Kaschbach, in the Eulengebirge.*

In this room, which does not measure six feet from the dilapidated wooden floor to the smoke-blackened rafters, sit four people. Two young girls, EMMA *and* BERTHA BAUMERT, *are working at their looms;* MOTHER BAUMERT, *a decrepit old woman, sits on a stool beside the bed, with a winding-wheel in front of her; her idiot son* AUGUST *sits on a foot-stool, also winding. He is twenty, has a small body and head, and long, spider-like legs and arms.*

Faint, rosy evening light makes its way through two small windows in the right wall, which have their broken panes pasted over with paper or stuffed with straw. It lights up the flaxen hair of the girls, which falls loose on their slender white necks and thin bare shoulders, and their coarse chemises. These, with a short petticoat of the roughest linen, form their whole attire. The warm glow falls on the old woman's face, neck, and breast — a face worn away to a skeleton, with shrivelled skin and sunken eyes, red and watery with smoke, dust, and working by lamplight — a

long goître neck, wrinkled and sinewy — a hollow breast covered with faded, ragged shawls.

Part of the right wall is also lighted up, with stove, stove-bench, bedstead, and one or two gaudily coloured sacred prints. On the stove rail rags are hanging to dry, and behind the stove is a collection of worthless lumber. On the bench stand some old pots and cooking utensils, and potato parings are laid out on it, on paper, to dry. Hanks of yarn and reels hang from the rafters; baskets of bobbins stand beside the looms. In the back wall there is a low door without fastening. Beside it a bundle of willow wands is set up against the wall, and beyond them lie some damaged quarter-bushel baskets.

The room is full of sound — the rhythmic thud of the looms, shaking floor and walls, the click and rattle of the shuttles passing back and forward, and the steady whirr of the winding-wheels, like the hum of gigantic bees.

MOTHER BAUMERT

[*In a querulous, feeble voice, as the girls stop weaving and bend over their webs.*] Got to make knots again already, have you?

EMMA

[*The elder of the two girls, about twenty-two, tying a broken thread.*] It's the plagueyest web, this!

BERTHA

[*Fifteen.*] Yes, it's real bad yarn they've given us this time.

EMMA

What can have happened to father? He's been away since nine.

MOTHER BAUMERT

That he has! yes. Where in the wide world c'n he be?

BERTHA

Don't you worry yourself, mother.

MOTHER BAUMERT

I can't help it, Bertha lass.

[EMMA *begins to weave again.*

BERTHA

Stop a minute, Emma!

EMMA

What is it!

BERTHA

I thought I heard some one.

EMMA

It'll be Ansorge comin' home.

Enter Fritz, *a little, barefooted, ragged boy of four.*

Fritz

[*Whimpering.*] I'm hungry, mother.

Emma

Wait, Fritzel, wait a bit! Gran'father'll be here very soon, an' he's bringin' bread along with him, an' coffee too.

Fritz

But I'm awful hungry, mother.

Emma

Be a good boy now, Fritz. Listen to what I'm tellin' you. He'll be here this minute. He's bringin' nice bread an' nice corn-coffee; an' when we stops workin' mother'll take the tater peelin's and carry them to the farmer, and the farmer'll give her a drop o' good buttermilk for her little boy.

Fritz

Where's grandfather gone?

Emma

To the manufacturer, Fritz, with a web.

Fritz

To the manufacturer?

EMMA

Yes, yes, Fritz, down to Dreissiger's at Peterswaldau.

FRITZ

Is it there he gets the bread?

EMMA

Yes; Dreissiger gives him money, and then he buys the bread.

FRITZ

Does he give him a heap of money?

EMMA

[*Impatiently.*] Oh, stop that chatter, boy.

[*She and* BERTHA *go on weaving for a time, and then both stop again.*

BERTHA

August, go and ask Ansorge if he'll give us a light. [AUGUST *goes out accompanied by* FRITZ.

MOTHER BAUMERT

[*Overcome by her childish apprehension, whimpers.*] Emma! Bertha! where c'n the man be stayin'?

BERTHA

Maybe he looked in to see Hauffe.

MOTHER BAUMERT

[*Crying.*] What if he's sittin' drinkin' in the public-house?

EMMA

Don't cry, mother! You know well enough father's not the man to do that.

MOTHER BAUMERT

[*Half distracted by a multitude of gloomy forebodings.*] What . . . what . . . what's to become of us if he don't come home? if he drinks the money, an' don't bring us nothin' at all? There's not so much as a handful o' salt in the house — not a bite o' bread, nor a bit o' wood for the fire.

BERTHA

Wait a bit, mother! It's moonlight just now. We'll take August with us and go into the wood and get some sticks.

MOTHER BAUMERT

Yes, an' be caught by the forester.

ANSORGE, *an old weaver of gigantic stature, who has to bend down to get into the room, puts his head and shoulders in at the door. Long, unkempt hair and beard.*

ANSORGE

What's wanted?

BERTHA

Light, if you please.

Ansorge

[*In a muffled voice, as if speaking in a sick-room.*] There's good daylight yet.

Mother Baumert

Is we to sit in the dark next?

Ansorge

I've to do the same mayself. [*Goes out.*

Bertha

It's easy to see that he's a miser.

Emma

Well, there's nothin' for it but to sit an' wait his pleasure.

Enter Mrs. Heinrich, *a woman of thirty, heavy with child; an expression of torturing anxiety and apprehension on her worn face.*

Mrs. Heinrich

Good evenin' t'you all.

Mother Baumert

Well, Jenny, and what's your news?

Mrs. Heinrich

[*Who limps.*] I've got a piece o' glass into my foot.

BERTHA

Come an' sit down, then, an' I'll see if I c'n get it out.

[MRS. HEINRICH *seats herself.* BERTHA *kneels down in front of her, and examines her foot.*

MOTHER BAUMERT

How are ye all at home, Jenny?

MRS. HEINRICH

[*Breaks out despairingly.*] Things is in a terrible way with us!

[*She struggles in vain against a rush of tears; then weeps silently.*

MOTHER BAUMERT

The best thing as could happen to the likes o' us, Jenny, would be if God had pity on us an' took us away out o' this weary world.

MRS. HEINRICH

[*No longer able to control herself, screams, still crying.*] My children's starvin'. [*Sobs and moans.*] I don't know what to do no more! I c'n work till I drops — I'm more dead'n alive — things don't get different! There's nine hungry mouths to fill! We got a bit o' bread last night, but it wasn't enough even for the two smallest ones. Who was I to give it to, eh? They all cried; Me, me, mother! give it to me! . . . An' if it's like this while I'm still on my feet, what'll it be when I've to take to bed? Our few taters

was washed away. We haven't a thing to put in our mouths.

BERTHA

[*Has removed the bit of glass and washed the wound.*] We'll put a rag round it. Emma, see if you can find one.

MOTHER BAUMERT

We're no better off'n you, Jenny.

MRS. HEINRICH

You has your girls, any way. You've a husband as c'n work. Mine was taken with one o' his fits last week again — so bad that I didn't know what to do with him, and was half out o' my mind with fright. And when he's had a turn like that, he can't stir out o' bed under a week.

MOTHER BAUMERT

Mine's no better. He's goin' to pieces, too. He's breathin's bad now as well as his back. An' there's not a farthin' nor a farthin's worth in the house. If he don't bring a few pence with him to-day, I don't know what we're to do.

EMMA

It's the truth she's tellin' you, Jenny. We had to let father take the little dog with him to-day, to have him killed, that we might get a bite into our stomachs again!

MRS. HEINRICH

Haven't you got as much as a handful o' flour to spare?

MOTHER BAUMERT

An' that we haven't, Jenny. There's not as much as a grain o' salt in the house.

MRS. HEINRICH

Well, then, I don't know . . . [*Rises, stands still, brooding.*] I don't know what'll be the end o' this! It's more'n I c'n bear. [*Screams in rage and despair.*] I'd be contented if it was nothin' but pigs' food! — But I can't go home again empty-handed — that I can't. God forgive me, I see no other way out of it. [*She limps quickly out.*

MOTHER BAUMERT

[*Calls after her in a warning voice.*] Jenny, Jenny! don't you be doin' anything foolish, now!

BERTHA

She'll do herself no harm, mother. You needn't be afraid.

EMMA

That's the way she always goes on.

[*Seats herself at the loom and weaves for a few seconds.*

AUGUST *enters, carrying a tallow candle, and lighting his father,* OLD BAUMERT, *who follows close behind him, staggering under a heavy bundle of yarn.*

MOTHER BAUMERT

Oh, father, where have you been all this long time? Where have you been?

Old Baumert

Come now, mother, don't fall on a man like that. Give me time to get my breath first. An' look who I've brought with me.

Moritz Jaeger *comes stooping in at the low door. Reserve soldier, newly discharged. Middle height, rosy-cheeked, military carriage. His cap on the side of his head, hussar fashion, whole clothes and shoes, a clean shirt without collar. Draws himself up and salutes.*

Jaeger

[*In a hearty voice.*] Good-evenin', auntie Baumert!

Mother Baumert

Well, well now! and to think you've got back! An' you've not forgotten us? Take a chair, then, lad.

Emma

[*Wiping a wooden chair with her apron, and pushing it towards* Moritz.] An' so you've come to see what poor folks is like again, Moritz?

Jaeger

I say, Emma, is it true that you've got a boy nearly old enough to be a soldier? Where did you get hold o' him, eh?

[Bertha, *having taken the small supply of provisions which her father has brought, puts meat into a saucepan, and shoves it into the oven, while* August *lights the fire.*

BERTHA

You knew weaver Finger, didn't you?

MOTHER BAUMERT

We had him here in the house with us. He was ready enough to marry her; but he was too far gone in consumption; he was as good as a dead man. It didn't happen for want o' warnin' from me. But do you think she would listen? Not she. Now he's dead an' forgotten long ago, an' she's left with the boy to provide for as best she can. But now tell us how you've been gettin' on, Moritz.

OLD BAUMERT

You've only to look at him, mother, to know that. He's had luck. It'll be about as much as he can do to speak to the likes o' us. He's got clothes like a prince, an' a silver watch, an' thirty shillings in his pocket into the bargain.

JAEGER

[*Stretching himself consequentially, a knowing smile on his face.*] I can't complain. I didn't get on so badly in the regiment.

OLD BAUMERT

He was the major's own servant. Just listen to him — he speaks like a gentleman.

JAEGER

I've got so accustomed to it that I can't help it.

MOTHER BAUMERT

Well, now, to think that such a good-for-nothin' as you was should have come to be a rich man. For there wasn't nothin' to be made of you. You would never sit still to wind more than a hank of yarn at a time, that you wouldn't. Off you went to your tomtit boxes an' your robin redbreast snares — they was all you cared about. Isn't it the truth I'm telling?

JAEGER

Yes, yes, auntie, it's true enough. It wasn't only redbreasts. I went after swallows too.

EMMA

Though we were always tellin' you that swallows was poison.

JAEGER

What did I care? — But how have you all been gettin' on, auntie Baumert?

MOTHER BAUMERT

Oh, badly, lad, badly these last four years. I've had the rheumatics — just look at them hands. An' it's more than likely as I've had a stroke o' some kind too, I'm that helpless. I can hardly move a limb, an' nobody knows the pains I suffers.

OLD BAUMERT

She's in a bad way, she is. She'll not hold out long.

BERTHA

We've to dress her in the mornin' an' undress her at night, an' to feed her like a baby.

MOTHER BAUMERT

[*Speaking in a complaining, tearful voice.*] Not a thing c'n I do for myself. It's far worse than bein' ill. For it's not only a burden to myself I am, but to every one else. Often and often do I pray to God to take me. For oh! mine's a weary life. I don't know . . . p'r'aps they think . . . but I'm one that's been a hard worker all my days. An' I've always been able to do my turn too; but now, all at once, [*she vainly attempts to rise*] I can't do nothin'.— I've a good husband an' good children, but to have to sit here and see them . . .! Look at the girls! There's hardly any blood left in them — faces the colour of a sheet. But on they must work at these weary looms whether they earn enough to keep theirselves or not. What sort o' life is it they lead? Their feet never off the treadle from year's end to year's end. An' with it all they can't scrape together as much as'll buy them clothes that they can let theirselves be seen in; never a step can they go to church, to hear a word o' comfort. They're liker scarecrows than young girls of fifteen and twenty.

BERTHA

[*At the stove.*] It's beginnin' to smoke again!

OLD BAUMERT

There now; look at that smoke. And we can't do nothin' for it. The whole stove's goin' to

pieces. We must let it fall, and swallow the soot. We're coughin' already, one worse than the other. We may cough till we choke, or till we cough our lungs up — nobody cares.

JAEGER

But this here is Ansorge's business; he must see to the stove.

BERTHA

He'll see us out o' the house first; he has plenty against us without that.

MOTHER BAUMERT

We've only been in his way this long time past.

OLD BAUMERT

One word of a complaint an' out we go. He's had no rent from us this last half-year.

MOTHER BAUMERT

A well-off man like him needn't be so hard.

OLD BAUMERT

He's no better off than we is, mother. He's hard put to it too, for all he holds his tongue about it.

MOTHER BAUMERT

He's got his house.

OLD BAUMERT

What are you talkin' about, mother? Not one stone in the wall is the man's own.

JAEGER

[*Has seated himself, and taken a short pipe with gay tassels out of one coat-pocket, and a quart bottle of brandy out of another.*] Things can't go on like this. I'm dumfoundered when I see the life the people live here. The very dogs in the towns live better.

OLD BAUMERT

[*Eagerly.*] That's what I says! Eh? eh? You know it too! But if you say that here, they'll tell you that it's only bad times.

Enter ANSORGE, *an earthenware pan with soup in one hand, in the other a half-finished quarter-bushel basket.*

ANSORGE

Glad to see you again, Moritz!

JAEGER

Thank you, father Ansorge — same to you!

ANSORGE

[*Shoving his pan into the oven.*] Why, lad, you look like a duke!

OLD BAUMERT

Show him your watch, Moritz. An' he's got a new suit of clothes, an' thirty shillings cash.

ANSORGE

[*Shaking his head.*] Is that so? Well, well!

EMMA

[*Puts the potato-parings into a bag.*] I must be off; I'll maybe get a drop o' buttermilk for these.

[*Goes out.*

JAEGER

[*The others hanging intently and devoutly on his words.*] You know how you all used to be down on me. It was always: Wait, Moritz, till your soldierin' time comes — you'll catch it then. But you see how well I've got on. At the end o' the first half-year I had my good conduct stripes. You've got to be willin'— that's where the secret lies. I brushed the sergeant's boots; I groomed his horse; I fetched his beer. I was as sharp as a needle. Always ready, accoutrements clean and shinin'— first at stables, first at roll-call, first in the saddle. An' when the bugle sounded to the assault — why, then, blood and thunder, and ride to the devil with you!! I was as keen as a pointer. Says I to myself: There's no help for it now, my boy, it's got to be done; and I set my mind to it and did it. Till at last the major said before the whole squadron: There's a hussar now that shows you what a hussar should be!

[*Silence. He lights his pipe.*

ANSORGE

[*Shaking his head.*] Well, well, well! You had luck with you, Moritz!

[*Sits down on the floor, with his willow twigs beside him, and continues mending the basket, which he holds between his legs.*

Old Baumert

Let's hope you've brought some of it to us.— Are we to have a drop to drink your health in?

Jaeger

Of course you are, father Baumert. And when this bottle's done, we'll send for more.

[*He flings a coin on the table.*

Ansorge

[*Open mouthed with amazement.*] Oh my! Oh my! What goings on to be sure! Roast meat frizzlin' in the oven! A bottle o' brandy on the table! [*He drinks out of the bottle.*] Here's to you, Moritz! — Well, well, well!

[*The bottle circulates freely after this.*

Old Baumert

If we could any way have a bit o' meat on Sundays and holidays, instead o' never seein' the sight of it from year's end to year's end! Now we'll have to wait till another poor little dog finds its way into the house like this one did four weeks gone by — an' that's not likely to happen soon again.

Ansorge

Have you killed the little dog?

Old Baumert

We had to do that or starve.

Ansorge

Well, well! That's so!

Mother Baumert

A nice, kind little beast he was, too!

Jaeger

Are you as keen as ever on roast dog hereabouts?

Old Baumert

Lord, if we could only get enough of it!

Mother Baumert

A nice little bit o' meat like that does you a lot o' good.

Old Baumert

Have you lost the taste for it, Moritz? Stay with us a bit, and it'll soon come back to you.

Ansorge

[*Sniffing.*] Yes, yes! That will be a tasty bite — what a good smell it has!

Old Baumert

[*Sniffing.*] Fine as spice, you might say.

Ansorge

Come, then, Moritz, tell us your opinion, you that's been out and seen the world. Is things at all like to improve for us weavers, eh?

JAEGER

They would need to.

ANSORGE

We're in an awful state here. It's not livin' an' it's not dyin'. A man fights to the bitter end, but he's bound to be beat at last — to be left without a roof over his head, you may say without ground under his feet. As long as he can work at the loom he can earn some sort o poor, miserable livin'. But it's many a day since I've been able to get that sort o' job. Now I tries to put a bite into my mouth with this here basket-makin'. I sits at it late into the night, and by the time I tumbles into bed I've earned three-halfpence. I puts it to you as knows things, if a man can live on that, when everything's so dear? Nine shillin' goes in one lump for house tax, three shillin' for land tax, nine shillin' for mortgage interest — that makes one pound one. I may reckon my year's earnin' at just double that money, and that leaves me twenty-one shillin' for a whole year's food, an' fire, an' clothes, an' shoes; and I've got to keep up some sort of a place to live in. An' there's odds an' ends. Is it a wonder if I'm behindhand with my interest payments?

OLD BAUMERT

Some one would need to go to Berlin an' tell the King how hard put to it we are.

JAEGER

Little good that would do, father Baumert. There's been plenty written about it in the news-

papers. But the rich people, they can turn and twist things round . . . as cunning as the devil himself.

Old Baumert

[*Shaking his head.*] To think they've no more sense than that in Berlin.

Ansorge

And is it really true, Moritz? Is there no law to help us? If a man hasn't been able to scrape together enough to pay his mortgage interest, though he's worked the very skin off his hands, must his house be taken from him? The peasant that's lent the money on it, he wants his rights — what else can you look for from him? But what's to be the end of it all, I don't know.— If I'm put out o' the house . . . [*In a voice choked by tears.*] I was born here, and here my father sat at his loom for more than forty year. Many was the time he said to mother: Mother, when I'm gone, keep hold o' the house. I've worked hard for it. Every nail means a night's weavin', every plank a year's dry bread. A man would think that . . .

Jaeger

They're just as like to take the last bite out of your mouth — that's what they are.

Ansorge

Well, well, well! I would rather be carried out than have to walk out now in my old days. Who minds dyin'? My father, he was glad to die. At the very end he got frightened, but I crept into

bed beside him, an' he quieted down again. Think of it: I was a lad of thirteen then. I was tired and fell asleep beside him — I knew no better — and when I woke he was quite cold.

MOTHER BAUMERT

[*After a pause.*] Give Ansorge his soup out o' the oven, Bertha.

BERTHA

Here, father Ansorge, it'll do you good.

ANSORGE

[*Eating and shedding tears.*] Well, well, well!

[OLD BAUMERT *has begun to eat the meat out of the saucepan.*

MOTHER BAUMERT

Father, father, can't you have patience an' let Bertha serve it up properly?

OLD BAUMERT

[*Chewing.*] It's two years now since I took the sacrament. I went straight after that an' sold my Sunday coat, an' we bought a good bit o' pork, an' since then never a mouthful of meat has passed my lips till to-night.

JAEGER

We don't need no meat! The manufacturers eats it for us. It's the fat o' the land *they* lives on. Whoever don't believe that has only to go down to Bielau and Peterswaldau. He'll see fine

things there — palace upon palace, with towers and iron railings and plate-glass windows. Who do they all belong to? Why, of course, the manufacturers! No signs of bad times there! Baked and boiled and fried — horses and carriages and governesses — they've money to pay for all that and goodness knows how much more. They're swelled out to burstin' with pride and good livin'.

ANSORGE

Things was different in my young days. Then the manufacturers let the weaver have his share. Now they keeps everything to theirselves. An' would you like to know what's at the bottom of it all? It's that the fine folks nowadays believes neither in God nor devil. What do they care about commandments or punishments? And so they steals our last scrap o' bread, an' leaves us no chance of earnin' the barest living. For it's their fault. If our manufacturers was good men, there would be no bad times for us.

JAEGER

Listen, then, and I'll read you something that will please you. [*He takes one or two loose papers from his pocket.*] I say, August, run and fetch another quart from the public-house. Eh, boy, do you laugh all day long?

MOTHER BAUMERT

No one knows why, but our August's always happy — grins an' laughs, come what may. Off with you then, quick! [*Exit* AUGUST *with the*

empty brandy-bottle.] You've got something good now, eh, father?

Old Baumert

[*Still chewing; his spirits are rising from the effect of food and drink.*] Moritz, you're the very man we want. You can read an' write. You understand the weavin' trade, and you've a heart to feel for the poor weavers' sufferin's. You should stand up for us here.

Jaeger

I'd do that quick enough! There's nothing I'd like better than to give the manufacturers round here a bit of a fright — dogs that they are! I'm an easy-goin' fellow, but let me once get worked up into a real rage, and I'll take Dreissiger in the one hand and Dittrich in the other, and knock their heads together till the sparks fly out o' their eyes.— If we could only arrange all to join together, we'd soon give the manufacturers a proper lesson . . . we wouldn't need no King an' no Government . . . all we'd have to do would be to say: We wants this and that, and we don't want the other thing. There would be a change of days then. As soon as they see that there's some pluck in us, they'll cave in. I know the rascals; they're a pack o' cowardly hounds.

Mother Baumert

There's some truth in what you say. I'm not a bad woman. I've always been the one to say as how there must be rich folks as well as poor. But when things come to such a pass as this . . .

JAEGER

The devil may take them all, for what I care. It would be no more than they deserves.

[OLD BAUMERT *has quietly gone out.*

BERTHA

Where's father?

MOTHER BAUMERT

I don't know where he can have gone.

BERTHA

Do you think he's not been able to stomach the meat, with not gettin' none for so long?

MOTHER BAUMERT

[*In distress, crying.*] There now, there! He's not even able to keep it down when he's got it. Up it comes again, the only bite o' good food as he's tasted this many a day.

Re-enter OLD BAUMERT, *crying with rage.*

OLD BAUMERT

It's no good! I'm too far gone! Now that I've at last got hold of somethin' with a taste in it, my stomach won't keep it.

[*He sits down on the bench by the stove crying.*

JAEGER

[*With a sudden violent ebullition of rage.*] An' yet there's people not far from here, justices they

call themselves too, over-fed brutes, that have nothing to do all the year round but invent new ways of wastin' their time. An' these people say that the weavers would be quite well off if only they wasn't so lazy.

Ansorge

The men as says that are no men at all, they're monsters.

Jaeger

Never mind, father Ansorge; we're makin' the place hot for 'em. Becker and I have been and given Dreissiger a piece of our mind, and before we came away we sang him "Bloody Justice."

Ansorge

Good Lord! Is that the song?

Jaeger

Yes; I have it here.

Ansorge

They calls it Dreissiger's song, don't they?

Jaeger

I'll read it to you.

Mother Baumert

Who wrote it?

JAEGER

That's what nobody knows. Now listen.

[*He reads, hesitating like a schoolboy, with incorrect accentuation, but unmistakably strong feeling. Despair, suffering, rage, hatred, thirst for revenge, all find utterance.*

The justice to us weavers dealt
Is bloody, cruel, and hateful;
Our life's one torture, long drawn out:
For Lynch law we'd be grateful.

Stretched on the rack day after day,
Hearts sick and bodies aching,
Our heavy sighs their witness bear
To spirit slowly breaking.

[*The words of the song make a strong impression on* OLD BAUMERT. *Deeply agitated, he struggles against the temptation to interrupt* JAEGER. *At last he can keep quiet no longer.*

OLD BAUMERT

[*To his wife, half laughing, half crying, stammering.*] Stretched on the rack day after day. Whoever wrote that, mother, wrote the truth. You can bear witness . . . eh, how does it go? "Our heavy sighs their witness bear" . . . What's the rest?

JAEGER

"To spirit slowly breaking."

OLD BAUMERT

You know the way we sigh, mother, day and night, sleepin' and wakin'.

[ANSORGE *has stopped working, and covers on the floor, strongly agitated.* MOTHER BAUMERT *and* BERTHA *wipe their eyes frequently during the course of the reading.*

JAEGER

[*Continues to read.*]

The Dreissigers true hangmen are,
Servants no whit behind them;
Masters and men with one accord
Set on the poor to grind them.

You villains all, you brood of hell . . .

OLD BAUMERT

[*Trembling with rage, stamping on the floor.*] Yes, brood of hell!!!

JAEGER

[*Reads.*]

You fiends in fashion human,
A curse will fall on all like you,
Who prey on man and woman.

ANSORGE

Yes, yes, a curse upon them!

OLD BAUMERT

[*Clenching his fist, threateningly.*] You prey on man and woman.

JAEGER

[*Reads.*]

The suppliant knows he asks in vain,
Vain every word that's spoken.
"If not content, then go and starve —
Our rules cannot be broken."

OLD BAUMERT

What is it? "The suppliant knows he asks in vain"? Every word of it's true . . . every word . . . as true as the Bible. He knows he asks in vain.

ANSORGE

Yes, yes! It's all no good.

JAEGER

[*Reads.*]

Then think of all our woe and want,
O ye who hear this ditty!
Our struggle vain for daily bread
Hard hearts would move to pity.

But pity's what *you've* never known,—
You'd take both skin and clothing,
You cannibals, whose cruel deeds
Fill all good men with loathing.

OLD BAUMERT

[*Jumps up, beside himself with excitement.*] Both skin and clothing. It's true, it's all true! Here I stands, Robert Baumert, master-weaver of Kaschbach. Who can bring up anything against

me? . . . I've been an honest, hard-workin' man all my life long, an' look at me now! What have I to show for it? Look at me! See what they've made of me! Stretched on the rack day after day. [*He holds out his arms.*] Feel that! Skin and bone! "You villains all, you brood of hell!!"

[*He sinks down on a chair, weeping with rage and despair.*

ANSORGE

[*Flings his basket from him into a corner, rises, his whole body trembling with rage, gasps.*] An' the time's come now for a change, I say. We'll stand it no longer! We'll stand it no longer! Come what may!

END OF THE SECOND ACT

THE THIRD ACT

The common-room of the principal public-house in Peterswaldau. A large room with a raftered roof supported by a central wooden pillar, round which a table runs. In the back wall, a little to the right of the pillar, is the entrance-door, through the opening of which the spacious lobby or outer room is seen, with barrels and brewing utensils. To the right of this door, in the corner, is the bar — a high wooden counter with receptacles for beer-mugs, glasses, etc.; a cupboard with rows of brandy and liqueur bottles on the wall behind, and between counter and cupboard a narrow space for the barkeeper. In front of the bar stands a table with a gay-coloured cover, a pretty lamp hanging above it, and several cane chairs placed around it. Not far off, in the right wall, is a door with the inscription: Bar Parlour. Nearer the front on the same side an old eight-day clock stands ticking. At the back, to the left of the entrance-door, is a table with bottles and glasses, and beyond this, in the corner, is the great tile-oven. In the left wall there are three small windows. Below them runs a long bench; and in front of each stands a large oblong wooden table, with the end towards the wall. There are benches with backs along the sides of these

tables, and at the end of each facing the window stands a wooden chair. The walls are washed blue and decorated with advertisements, coloured prints and oleographs, among the latter a portrait of Frederick William IV.

Welzel, *the publican, a good-natured giant, upwards of fifty, stands behind the counter, letting beer run from a barrel into a glass.*

Mrs. Welzel *is ironing by the stove. She is a handsome, tidily dressed woman in her thirty-fifth year.*

Anna Welzel, *a good-looking girl of seventeen, with a quantity of beautiful, fair, reddish hair, sits, neatly dressed, with her embroidery, at the table with the coloured cover. She looks up from her work for a moment and listens, as the sound of a funeral hymn sung by school-children is heard in the distance.*

Wiegand, *the joiner, in his working clothes, is sitting at the same table, with a glass of Bavarian beer before him. His face shows that he understands what the world requires of a man if he is to attain his ends — namely, craftiness, swiftness, and relentless pushing forward.*

A Commercial Traveller *is seated at the pillar-table, vigorously masticating a beef-steak. He is of middle height, stout and thriving-looking, inclined to jocosity, lively, and impudent. He is dressed in the fashion of the day, and his portmanteau, pattern-case, umbrella, overcoat, and travelling rug lie on chairs beside him.*

WELZEL

[*Carrying a glass of beer to the* TRAVELLER, *but addressing* WIEGAND.] The devil's broke loose in Peterswaldau to-day.

WIEGAND

[*In a sharp, shrill voice.*] That's because it's delivery day at Dreissiger's.

MRS. WELZEL

But they don't generally make such an awful row.

WIEGAND

It's may be because of the two hundred new weavers that he's going to take on.

MRS. WELZEL

[*At her ironing.*] Yes, yes, that'll be it. If he wants two hundred, six hundred's sure to have come. There's no lack of *them.*

WIEGAND

No, they'll last. There's no fear of their dying out, let them be ever so badly off. They bring more children into the world than we know what to do with. [*The strains of the funeral hymn are suddenly heard more distinctly.*] There's a funeral to-day too. Weaver Nentwich is dead, you know.

WELZEL

He's been long enough about it. He's been goin' about like a livin' ghost this many a long day.

WIEGAND

You never saw such a little coffin, Welzel; it was the tiniest, miserablest little thing I ever glued together. And what a corpse! It didn't weigh ninety pounds.

TRAVELLER

[*His mouth full.*] What I don't understand's this. . . . Take up whatever paper you like and you'll find the most heartrending accounts of the destitution among the weavers. You get the impression that three-quarters of the people in this neighbourhood are starving. Then you come and see a funeral like what's going on just now. I met it as I came into the village. Brass band, schoolmaster, school children, pastor, and such a procession behind them that you would think it was the Emperor of China that was getting buried. If the people have money to spend on this sort of thing, well . . .! [*He takes a drink of beer; puts down the glass; suddenly and jocosely.*] What do you say to it, Miss? Don't you agree with me?

[ANNA *gives an embarrassed laugh, and goes on working busily.*

TRAVELLER

Now, I'll take a bet that these are slippers for papa.

WELZEL

You're wrong, then; I wouldn't put such things on my feet.

Traveller

You don't say so! Now, I would give half of what I'm worth if these slippers were for me.

Mrs. Welzel

Oh, he don't know nothing about such things.

Wiegand

[*Has coughed once or twice, moved his chair, and prepared himself to speak.*] You were sayin', sir, that you wondered to see such a funeral as this. I tell you, and Mrs. Welzel here will bear me out, that it's quite a small funeral.

Traveller

But, my good man . . . what a monstrous lot of money it must cost! Where does all that come from?

Wiegand

If you'll excuse me for saying so, sir, there's a deal of foolishness among the poorer working people hereabouts. They have a kind of inordinate idea, if I may say so, of the respect an' duty an' honour they're bound to show to such as is taken from their midst. And when it comes to be a case of parents, then there's no bounds whatever to their superstitiousness. The children and the nearest family scrapes together every farthing they can call their own, an' what's still wanting, that they borrow from some rich man. They run themselves into debt over head and ears; they're owing money to the pastor, to the sexton, and to all concerned. Then there's the victuals an' the

drink, an' such like. No, sir, I'm far from speaking against dutifulness to parents; but it's too much when it goes the length of the mourners having to bear the weight of it for the rest of their lives.

TRAVELLER

But surely the pastor might reason them out of such foolishness.

WIEGAND

Begging your pardon, sir, but I must mention that every little place hereabouts has its church an' its reverend pastor to support. These honourable gentlemen has their advantages from big funerals. The larger the attendance is, the larger the offertory is bound to be. Whoever knows the circumstances connected with the working classes here, sir, will assure you that the pastors are strong against quiet funerals.

Enter HORNIG, *the rag dealer, a little bandy-legged old man, with a strap round his chest.*

HORNIG

Good-mornin', ladies and gentlemen! A glass o' schnapps, if you please, Mr. Welzel. Has the young mistress anything for me to-day? I've got beautiful ribbons in my cart, Miss Anna, an' tapes, an' garters, an' the very best of pins an' hairpins an' hooks an' eyes. An' all in exchange for a few rags. [*In a changed voice.*] An' out of them rags fine white paper's to be made, for your sweetheart to write you a letter on.

ANNA

Thank you, but I've nothing to do with sweethearts.

MRS. WELZEL

[*Putting a bolt into her iron.*] No, she's not that kind. She'll not hear of marrying.

TRAVELLER

[*Jumps up, affecting delighted surprise, goes forward to* ANNA'S *table, and holds out his hand to her across it.*] That's sensible, Miss. You and I think alike in this matter. Give me your hand on it. We'll both remain single.

ANNA

[*Blushing scarlet, gives him her hand.*] But you are married already!

TRAVELLER

Not a bit of it. I only pretend to be. You think so because I wear a ring. I only have it on my finger to protect my charms against shameless attacks. I'm not afraid of you, though. [*He puts the ring into his pocket.*] But tell me, truly, Miss, are you quite determined never, never, never, to marry?

ANNA

[*Shakes her head.*] Oh, get along with you!

MRS. WELZEL

You may trust her to remain single unless something very extra good turns up.

TRAVELLER

And why shouldn't it? I know of a rich Silesian proprietor who married his mother's lady's maid. And there's Dreissiger, the rich manufacturer, his wife is an innkeeper's daughter too, and not half so pretty as you, Miss, though she rides in her carriage now, with servants in livery. And why not? [*He marches about, stretching himself, and stamping his feet.*] Let me have a cup of coffee, please.

Enter ANSORGE *and* OLD BAUMERT, *each with a bundle. They seat themselves meekly and silently beside* HORNIG, *at the front table to the left.*

WELZEL

How are you, father Ansorge? Glad to see you once again.

HORNIG

Yes, it's not often as you crawl down from that smoky old nest.

ANSORGE

[*Visibly embarrassed, mumbles.*] I've been fetchin' myself a web again.

BAUMER

He's goin' to work at a shilling the web.

ANSORGE

I wouldn't ha' done it, but there's no more to be made now by basket-weavin'.

WIEGAND

It's always better than nothin'. He does it only to give you employment. I know Dreissiger very well. When I was up there takin' out his double windows last week we were talkin' about it, him and me. It's out of pity that he does it.

ANSORGE

Well, well, well! That may be so.

WELZEL

[*Setting a glass of schnapps on the table before each of the weavers.*] Here you are, then. I say, Ansorge, how long is it since you had a shave? The gentleman over there would like to know.

TRAVELLER

[*Calls across.*] Now, Mr. Welzel, you know I didn't say that. I was only struck by the venerable appearance of the master-weaver. It isn't often one sees such a gigantic figure.

ANSORGE

[*Scratching his head, embarrassed.*] Well, well!

TRAVELLER

Such specimens of primitive strength are rare nowadays. We're all rubbed smooth by civilisation . . . but I can still take pleasure in nature untampered with. . . . These bushy eyebrows! That tangled length of beard!

HORNIG

Let me tell you, sir, that them people haven't the money to pay a barber, and as to a razor for themselves, that's altogether beyond them. What grows, grows. They haven't nothing to throw away on their outsides.

TRAVELLER

My good friend, you surely don't imagine that I would . . . [*Aside to* WELZEL.] Do you think I might offer the hairy one a glass of beer?

WELZEL

No, no; you mustn't do that. He wouldn't take it. He's got some queer ideas in that head o' his.

TRAVELLER

All right, then, I won't. With your permission, Miss. [*He seats himself at* ANNA'S *table.*] I declare, Miss, that I've not been able to take my eyes off your hair since I came in — such glossy softness, such a splendid quantity! [*Ecstatically kisses his finger-tips.*] And what a colour! . . . like ripe wheat. Come to Berlin with that hair and you'll create no end of a sensation. On my honour, with hair like that you may go to Court. . . . [*Leans back, looking at it.*] Glorious, simply glorious!

WIEGAND

They've given her a fine name because of it.

TRAVELLER

And what may that be?

ANNA

[*Laughing quietly to herself.*] Oh, don't listen to that!

HORNIG

The chestnut filly, isn't it?

WELZEL

Come now, we've had enough o' this. I'm not goin' to have the girl's head turned altogether. She's had a-plenty of silly notions put into it already. She'll hear of nothing under a count to-day, and to-morrow it'll be a prince.

MRS. WELZEL

Don't abuse the girl, father. There's no harm in wantin' to rise in the world. It's as well that people don't all think as you do, or nobody would get on at all. If Dreissiger's grandfather had been of your way of thinkin', they would be poor weavers still. And now they're rollin' in wealth. An' look at old Tromtra. He was nothing but a weaver, too, and now he owns twelve estates, an' he's been made a nobleman into the bargain.

WIEGAND

Yes, Welzel, you must look at the thing fairly. Your wife's in the right this time. I can answer for that. I'd never be where I am, with seven workmen under me, if I had thought like you.

HORNIG

Yes, you understand the way to get on; that your worst enemy must allow. Before the weaver has taken to bed, you're gettin' his coffin ready.

WIEGAND

A man must stick to his business if he's to get on.

HORNIG

No fear of you for that. You know before the doctor when death's on the way to knock at a weaver's door.

WIEGAND

[*Attempting to laugh, suddenly furious.*] And you know better'n the police where the thieves are among the weavers, that keep back two or three bobbins full every week. It's rags you ask for but you don't say No, if there's a little yarn among them.

HORNIG

An' your corn grows in the churchyard. The more that are bedded on the sawdust, the better for you. When you see the rows o' little children's graves, you pats yourself on the belly, and says you: This has been a good year; the little brats have fallen like cockchafers off the trees. I can allow myself a quart extra in the week again.

WIEGAND

And supposin' this is all true, it still don't make me a receiver of stolen goods.

HORNIG

No; perhaps the worst you do is to send in an account twice to the rich fustian manufacturers, or to help yourself to a plank or two at Dreissiger's

when there's building goin' on and the moon happens not to be shinin'.

WIEGAND

[*Turning his back.*] Talk to any one you like, but not to me. [*Then suddenly.*] Hornig the liar!

HORNIG

Wiegand the coffin-jobber!

WIEGAND

[*To the rest of the company.*] He knows charms for bewitching cattle.

HORNIG

If you don't look out, I'll try one of 'em on you.

[WIEGAND *turns pale.*

MRS. WELZEL

[*Had gone out; now returns with the* TRAVELLER'S *coffee; in the act of putting it on the table.*] Perhaps you would rather have it in the parlour, sir?

TRAVELLER

Most certainly not! [*With a languishing look at* ANNA.] I could sit here till I die.

Enter a YOUNG FORESTER *and a* PEASANT, *the latter carrying a whip. They wish the others* "Good Morning," *and remain standing at the counter.*

PEASANT

Two brandies, if you please.

WELZEL

Good-morning to you, gentlemen.

[*He pours out their beverage; the two touch glasses, take a mouthful, and then set the glasses down on the counter.*

TRAVELLER

[*To* FORESTER.] Come far this morning, sir?

FORESTER

From Steinseiffersdorf — that's a good step.

Two old WEAVERS *enter, and seat themselves beside* ANSORGE, BAUMERT, *and* HORNIG.

TRAVELLER

Excuse me asking, but are you in Count Hochheim's service?

FORESTER

No. I'm in Count Keil's.

TRAVELLER

Yes, yes, of course — that was what I meant. One gets confused here among all the counts and barons and other gentlemen. It would take a giant's memory to remember them all. Why do you carry an axe, if I may ask?

FORESTER

I've just taken this one from a man who was stealing wood.

Old Baumert

Yes, their lordships are mighty strict with us about a few sticks for the fire.

Traveller

You must allow that if every one were to help himself to what he wanted . . .

Old Baumert

By your leave, sir, but there's a difference made here as elsewhere between the big an' the little thieves. There's some here as deals in stolen wood wholesale, and grows rich on it. But if a poor weaver . . .

First Old Weaver

[*Interrupts* Baumert.] We're forbid to take a single branch; but their lordships, they take the very skin off of us — we've assurance money to pay, an' spinning-money, an' charges in kind — we must go here an' go there, an' do so an' so much field work, all willy-nilly.

Ansorge

That's just how it is — what the manufacturer leaves us, their lordships takes from us.

Second Old Weaver

[*Has taken a seat at the next table.*] I've said it to his lordship hisself. By your leave, my lord, says I, it's not possible for me to work on the estate so many days this year. I comes right out with it. For why — my own bit of ground, my

lord, it's been next to carried away by the rains. I've to work night and day if I'm to live at all. For oh, what a flood that was . . .! There I stood an' wrung my hands, an' watched the good soil come pourin' down the hill, into the very house! And all that dear, fine seed! . . . I could do nothin' but roar an' cry until I couldn't see out o' my eyes for a week. And then I had to start an' wheel eighty heavy barrow-loads of earth up that hill, till my back was all but broken.

PEASANT

[*Roughly.*] You weavers here make such an awful outcry. As if we hadn't all to put up with what Heaven sends us. An' if you *are* badly off just now, whose fault is it but your own? What did you do when trade was good? Drank an' squandered all you made. If you had saved a bit then, you'd have it to fall back on now when times is bad, and not need to be goin' stealin' yarn and wood.

FIRST YOUNG WEAVER

[*Standing with several comrades in the lobby or outer room, calls in at the door.*] What's a peasant but a peasant, though he lies in bed till nine?

FIRST OLD WEAVER

The peasant an' the count, it's the same story with 'em both. Says the peasant when a weaver wants a house: I'll give you a little bit of a hole to live in, an' you'll pay me so much rent in money, an' the rest of it you'll make up by helpin' me to get in my hay an' my corn — and if that don't

please you, why, then you may go elsewhere. He tries another, and to the second he says the same as to the first.

BAUMERT

[*Angrily.*] The weaver's like a bone that every dog takes a gnaw at.

PEASANT

[*Furious.*] You starvin' curs, you're no good for anything. Can you yoke a plough? Can you draw a straight furrow or throw a bundle of sheaves on to a cart. You're fit for nothing but to idle about an' go after the women. A pack of scoundrelly ne'er-do-wells!

[*He has paid and now goes out.*

[*The* FORESTER *follows, laughing.* WELZEL, *the joiner, and* MRS. WELZEL *laugh aloud; the* TRAVELLER *laughs to himself. Then there is a moment's silence.*

HORNIG

A peasant like that's as stupid as his own ox. As if I didn't know all about the distress in the villages round here. Sad sights I've seen! Four and five lyin' naked on one sack of straw.

TRAVELLER

[*In a mildly remonstrative tone.*] Allow me to remark, my good man, that there's a great difference of opinion as to the amount of distress here in the Eulengebirge. If you can read . . .

HORNIG

I can read straight off, as well as you. An' I know what I've seen with my own eyes. It would be queer if a man that's travelled the country with a pack on his back these forty years an' more didn't know something about it. There was the Fullers, now. You saw the children scrapin' about among the dung-heaps with the peasants' geese. The people up there died naked, on the bare stone floors. In their sore need they ate the stinking weavers' glue. Hunger carried 'em off by the hundred.

TRAVELLER

You must be aware, since you are able to read, that strict investigation has been made by the Government, and that . . .

HORNIG

Yes, yes, we all know what that means. They send a gentleman that knows all about it already better nor if he had seen it, an' he goes about a bit in the village where the brook flows broad an' the best houses is. He don't want to dirty his shinin' boots. Thinks he to hisself: All the rest'll be the same as this. An' so he steps into his carriage, an' drives away home again, an' then writes to Berlin that there's no distress in the place at all. If he had but taken the trouble to go higher up into a village like that, to where the stream comes in, or across the stream on to the narrow side — or, better still, if he'd gone up to the little out-o'-the-way hovels on the hill above, some of 'em that black an' tumble-down as it would be the

waste of a good match to set fire to 'em — it's another kind o' report he'd have sent to Berlin. They should ha' come to me, these government gentlemen that wouldn't believe there was no distress here. I would ha' shown 'em something. I'd have opened their eyes for 'em in some of these starvation holes.

[*The strains of the Weavers' Song are heard, sung outside.*

WELZEL

There they are, roaring at that devil's song again.

WIEGAND

They're turning the whole place upside down.

MRS. WELZEL

You'd think there was something in the air.

JAEGER *and* BECKER *arm in arm, at the head of a troop of young weavers, march noisily through the outer room and enter the bar.*

JAEGER

Halt! To your places!

[*The new arrivals sit down at the various tables, and begin to talk to other weavers already seated there.*

HORNIG

[*Calls out to* BECKER.] What's up now, Becker, that you've got together a crowd like this?

BECKER

[*Significantly.*] Who knows but something may be goin' to happen? Eh, Moritz?

HORNIG

Come, come, lads. Don't you be a-gettin' of yourselves into mischief.

BECKER

Blood's flowed already. Would you like to see it?

[*He pulls up his sleeve and shows bleeding tattoo-marks on the upper part of his arm. Many of the other young weavers do the same.*

BECKER

We've been at barber Schmidt's gettin' ourselves vaccinated.

HORNIG

Now the thing's explained. Little wonder there's such an uproar in the place, with a band of young rapscallions like you paradin' round.

JAEGER

[*Consequentially, in a loud voice.*] You may bring two quarts at once, Welzel! I pay. Perhaps you think I haven't got the needful. You're wrong, then. If we wanted we could sit an' drink your best brandy an' swill coffee till to-morrow morning with any bagman in the land.

[*Laughter among the young weavers.*

TRAVELLER

[*Affecting comic surprise.*] Is the young gentleman kind enough to take notice of me?

[*Host, hostess, and their daughter,* WIEGAND, *and the* TRAVELLER *all laugh.*

JAEGER

If the cap fits, wear it.

TRAVELLER

Your affairs seem to be in a thriving condition, young man, if I may be allowed to say so.

JAEGER

I can't complain. I'm a traveller in made-up goods. I go shares with the manufacturers. The nearer starvation the weaver is, the better I fare. His want butters my bread.

BECKER

Well done, Moritz! You gave it him that time. Here's to you!

[WELZEL *has brought the corn-brandy. On his way back to the counter he stops, turns round slowly, and stands, an embodiment of phlegmatic strength, facing the weavers.*

WELZEL

[*Calmly but emphatically.*] You let the gentleman alone. He's done you no harm.

YOUNG WEAVERS

And we're doing him no harm.

[MRS. WELZEL *has exchanged a few words with the* TRAVELLER. *She takes the cup with the remains of his coffee and carries it into the parlour. The* TRAVELLER *follows her amidst the laughter of the weavers.*

YOUNG WEAVERS

[*Singing.*] "The Dreissigers the hangmen are, Servants no whit behind them."

WELZEL

Hush-sh! Sing that song anywhere else you like, but not in my house.

FIRST OLD WEAVER

He's quite right. Stop that singin', lads.

BECKER

[*Roars.*] But we must march past Dreissiger's, boys, and let him hear it once more.

WIEGAND

You'd better take care — you may march once too often! [*Laughter and cries of* Ho, ho!

WITTIG *has entered; a grey-haired old smith, bare-headed, with leather apron and wooden shoes, sooty from the smithy. He is standing at the counter waiting for his schnapps.*

WITTIG

Let 'em go on with their doin's. The dogs as barks most, bites least.

OLD WEAVERS

Wittig, Wittig!

WITTIG

Here he is. What do you want with him?

OLD WEAVERS

"It's Wittig!"—"Wittig, Wittig!"—"Come here, Wittig."—"Sit beside us, Wittig."

WITTIG

Do you think I would sit beside a set of rascals like you?

JAEGER

Come and take a glass with us.

WITTIG

Keep your brandy to yourselves. I pay for my own drink. [*Takes his glass and sits down beside* BAUMERT *and* ANSORGE. *Clapping the latter on the stomach.*] What's the weavers' food so nice? Sauerkraut and roasted lice!

OLD BAUMERT

[*Drunk with excitement.*] But what would you say now if they'd made up their minds as how they would put up with it no longer.

WITTIG

[*With pretended astonishment, staring open-mouthed at the old weaver.*] Heinerle! you don't mean to tell me that that's you? [*Laughs immoderately.*] O Lord, O Lord! I could laugh myself to death. Old Baumert risin' in rebellion! We'll have the tailors at it next, and then there'll be a rebellion among the baa-lambs, and the rats and the mice. Damn it all, but we'll see some sport.

[*He nearly splits with laughter.*

OLD BAUMERT

You needn't go on like that, Wittig. I'm the same man I've always been. I still say 'twould be better if things could be put right peaceably.

WITTIG

Rot! How could it be done peaceably? Did they do it peaceably in France? Did Robespeer tickle the rich men's palms? No! It was: Away with them, every one! To the gilyoteen with 'em! Allongs onfong! You've got your work before you. The geese'll not fly ready roasted into your mouths.

OLD BAUMERT

If I could make even half a livin' . . .

FIRST OLD WEAVER

The water's up to our chins now, Wittig.

SECOND OLD WEAVER

We're afraid to go home. It's all the same whether we works or whether we lies abed; it's starvation both ways.

FIRST OLD WEAVER

A man's like to go mad at home.

OLD ANSORGE

I've come to that pass now that I don't care how things goes.

OLD WEAVERS

[*With increasing excitement.*] "We've no peace anywhere."—"We've no spirit left to work."—"Up with us in Steenkunzendorf you can see a weaver sittin' by the stream washin' hisself the whole day long, naked as God made him. It's driven him clean out of his mind."

THIRD OLD WEAVER

[*Moved by the spirit, stands up and begins to "speak with tongues," stretching out his hand threateningly.*] Judgement is at hand! Have no dealings with the rich and the great! Judgement is at hand! The Lord God of Sabaoth . . .

[*Some of the weavers laugh. He is pulled down on to his seat.*

WELZEL

That's a chap that can't stand a single glass—he gets wild at once.

THIRD OLD WEAVER

[*Jumps up again.*] But they — they believe not in God, not in hell, not in heaven. They mock at religion . . .

FIRST OLD WEAVER

Come, come now, that's enough!

BECKER

You let him do his little bit o' preaching. There's many a one would be the better for takin' it to heart.

VOICES

[*In excited confusion.*] "Let him alone!" "Let him speak!"

THIRD OLD WEAVER

[*Raising his voice.*] But hell is opened, saith the Lord; its jaws are gaping wide, to swallow up all those that oppress the afflicted and pervert judgement in the cause of the poor. [*Wild excitement.*

THIRD OLD WEAVER

[*Suddenly declaiming schoolboy fashion.*]

When one has thought upon it well,
It's still more difficult to tell
Why they the linen-weaver's work despise.

BECKER

But we're fustian-weavers, man. [*Laughter.*

Hornig

The linen-weavers is ever so much worse off than you. They're wanderin' about among the hills like ghosts. You people here have still got the pluck left in you to kick up a row.

Wittig

Do you suppose the worst's over here? It won't be long till the manufacturers drain away that little bit of strength they still has left in their bodies.

Becker

You know what he said: It will come to the weavers workin' for a bite of bread. [*Uproar.*

Several Old and Young Weavers

Who said that?

Becker

Dreissiger said it.

A Young Weaver

The damned rascal should be hung up by the heels.

Jaeger

Look here, Wittig. You've always jawed such a lot about the French Revolution, and a good deal too about your own doings. A time may be coming, and that before long, when every one will have a chance to show whether he's a braggart or a true man.

WITTIG

[*Flaring up angrily.*] Say another word if you dare! Has you heard the whistle o' bullets? Has you done outpost duty in an enemy's country?

JAEGER

You needn't get angry about it. We're comrades. I meant no harm.

WITTIG

None of your comradeship for me, you impudent young fool.

Enter KUTSCHE, *the policeman.*

SEVERAL VOICES

Hush — sh! Police!

[*This calling goes on for some time, till at last there is complete silence, amidst which* KUTSCHE *takes his place at the central pillar table.*

KUTSCHE

A small brandy, please.

[*Again complete silence.*

WITTIG

I suppose you've come to see if we're all behavin' ourselves, Kutsche?

KUTSCHE

[*Paying no attention to* WITTIG.] Good-morning, Mr. Wiegand.

WIEGAND

[*Still in the corner in front of the counter.*] Good morning t'you.

KUTSCHE

How's trade?

WIEGAND

Thank you, much as usual.

BECKER

The chief constable's sent him to see if we're spoilin' our stomach on these big wages we're gettin'. [*Laughter.*

JAEGER

I say, Welzel, you will tell him how we've been feastin' on roast pork an' sauce an' dumplings and sauerkraut, and now we're sittin' at our champagne wine. [*Laughter.*

WELZEL

The world's upside down with them to-day.

KUTSCHE

An' even if you had the champagne wine and the roast meat, you wouldn't be satisfied. I've to get on without champagne wine as well as you.

BECKER

[*Referring to* KUTSCHE's *nose.*] He waters his beet-root with brandy and gin. An' it thrives on it too. [*Laughter.*

WITTIG

A p'liceman like that has a hard life. Now it's a starving beggar boy he has to lock up, then it's a pretty weaver girl he has to lead astray; then he has to get roarin' drunk an' beat his wife till she goes screamin' to the neighbours for help; and there's the ridin' about on horseback and the lyin' in bed till nine — nay, faith, but it's no easy job!

KUTSCHE

Jaw away; you'll jaw a rope round your neck in time. It's long been known what sort of a fellow you are. The magistrates knows all about that rebellious tongue o' yours. I know who'll drink wife and child into the poorhouse an' himself into gaol before long, who it is that'll go on agitatin' and agitatin' till he brings down judgment on himself and all concerned.

WITTIG

[*Laughs bitterly.*] It's true enough — no one knows what'll be the end of it. You may be right yet. [*Bursts out in fury.*] But if it does come to that, I know who I've got to thank for it, who it is that's blabbed to the manufacturers an' all the gentlemen round, an' blackened my character to that extent that they never give me a hand's turn of work to do — an' set the peasants an' the millers against me, so that I'm often a whole week without a horse to shoe or a wheel to put a tyre on. I know who's done it. I once pulled the damned brute off his horse, because he was givin' a little stupid boy the most awful flogging for stealin' a few unripe pears. But I tell you this, Kutsche,

and you know me — if you get me put into prison, you may make your own will. If I hears as much as a whisper of it, I'll take the first thing as comes handy, whether it's a horseshoe or a hammer, a wheel-spoke or a pail; I'll get hold of you if I've to drag you out of bed from beside your wife, and I'll beat in your brains, as sure as my name's Wittig.

[*He has jumped up and is going to rush at* Kutsche.

Old and Young Weavers

[*Holding him back.*] Wittig, Wittig! Don't lose your head!

Kutsche

[*Has risen involuntarily, his face pale. He backs towards the door while speaking. The nearer the door the higher his courage rises. He speaks the last words on the threshold, and then instantly disappears.*] What are you goin' on at me about? I didn't meddle with you. I came to say somethin' to the weavers. My business is with them an' not with you, and I've done nothing to you. But I've this to say to you weavers: The superintendent of police herewith forbids the singing of that song — Dreissiger's song, or whatever it is you calls it. And if the yelling of it on the streets isn't stopped at once, he'll provide you with plenty of time and leisure for goin' on with it in gaol. You may sing there, on bread an' water, to your hearts' content. [*Goes out.*

Wittig

[*Roars after him.*] He's no right to forbid it — not if we was to roar till the windows shook an' they could hear us at Reichenbach — not if we sang till the manufacturers' houses tumbled about their ears an' all the superintendents' helmets danced on the top of their heads. It's nobody's business but our own.

[Becker *has in the meantime got up, made a signal for singing, and now leads off, the others joining in.*

The justice to us weavers dealt
Is bloody, cruel, and hateful;
Our life's one torture, long drawn out;
For Lynch law we'd be grateful.

[Welzel *attempts to quiet them, but they pay no attention to him.* Wiegand *puts his hands to his ears and rushes off. During the singing of the next stanza the weavers rise and form into procession behind* Becker *and* Wittig, *who have given pantomimic signs for a general break-up.*

Stretched on the rack, day after day,
Hearts sick and bodies aching,
Our heavy sighs their witness bear
To spirit slowly breaking.

[*Most of the weavers sing the following stanza out on the street, only a few young fellows, who are paying, being still in the bar. At the conclusion of the stanza no one is left in the room except*

Welzel *and his wife and daughter,*
Hornig, *and* Old Baumert.

You villains all, you brood of hell,
You fiends in fashion human,
A curse will fall on all like you
Who prey on man and woman.

Welzel

[*Phlegmatically collecting the glasses.*] Their backs are up to-day, an' no mistake.

Hornig

[*To* Old Baumert, *who is preparing to go.*] What in the name of Heaven are they up to, Baumert?

Baumert

They're goin' to Dreissiger's to make him add something on to the pay.

Welzel

And are you joining in these foolish goings on?

Old Baumert

I've no choice, Welzel. The young men may an' the old men must.

[*Goes out rather shamefacedly.*

Hornig

It'll not surprise me if this ends badly.

Welzel

To think that even old fellows like him are goin' right off their heads!

Hornig

We all set our hearts on something!

END OF THE THIRD ACT

THE FOURTH ACT

Peterswaldau.— Private room of DREISSIGER, *the fustian manufacturer — luxuriously furnished in the chilly taste of the first half of this century. Ceiling, doors, and stove are white, and the wall paper, with its small, straight-lined floral pattern, is dull and cold in tone. The furniture is mahogany, richly-carved, and upholstered in red. On the right, between two windows with crimson damask curtains, stands the writing-table, a high bureau with falling flap. Directly opposite to this is the sofa, with the strong-box beside it; in front of the sofa a table, with chairs and easy-chairs arranged about it. Against the back wall is a gun-rack. All three walls are decorated with bad pictures in gilt frames. Above the sofa is a mirror with a heavily gilt rococo frame. On the left an ordinary door leads into the hall. An open folding door at the back shows the drawing-room, over-furnished in the same style of comfortless ostentation. Two ladies,* MRS. DREISSIGER *and* MRS. KITTELHAUS, *the Pastor's wife, are seen in the drawing-room, looking at pictures.* PASTOR KITTELHAUS *is there too, engaged in conversation with* WEINHOLD, *the tutor, a theological graduate.*

KITTELHAUS

[*A kindly little elderly man, enters the front room, smoking and chatting familiarly with the tutor, who is also smoking; he looks round and shakes his head in surprise at finding the room empty.*] You are young, Mr. Weinhold, which explains everything. At your age we old fellows held — well, I won't say the same opinions — but certainly opinions of the same tendency. And there's something fine about youth — youth with its grand ideals. But unfortunately, Mr. Weinhold, they don't last; they are as fleeting as April sunshine. Wait till you are my age. When a man has said his say from the pulpit for thirty years — fifty-two times every year, not including saints' days — he has inevitably calmed down. Think of me, Mr. Weinhold, when you come to that pass.

WEINHOLD

[*Nineteen, pale, thin, tall, with lanky fair hair; restless and nervous in his movements.*] With all due respect, Mr. Kittelhaus . . . I can't think . . . people have such different natures.

KITTELHAUS

My dear Mr. Weinhold, however restless-minded and unsettled a man may be — [*in a tone of reproof*] — and you are a case in point — however violently and wantonly he may attack the existing order of things, he calms down in the end. I grant you, certainly, that among our professional brethren individuals are to be found, who, at a fairly advanced age, still play youthful pranks.

One preaches against the drink evil and founds temperance societies, another publishes appeals which undoubtedly read most effectively. But what good do they do? The distress among the weavers, where it does exist, is in no way lessened — but the peace of society is undermined. No, no; one feels inclined in such cases to say: Cobbler, stick to your last; don't take to caring for the belly, you who have the care of souls. Preach the pure Word of God, and leave all else to Him who provides shelter and food for the birds, and clothes the lilies of the field.— But I should like to know where our good host, Mr. Dreissiger, has suddenly disappeared to.

[Mrs. Dreissiger, *followed by* Mrs. Kittelhaus, *now comes forward. She is a pretty woman of thirty, of a healthy, florid type. A certain discrepancy is noticeable between her deportment and way of expressing herself and her rich, elegant toilette.*

Mrs. Dreissiger

That's what I want to know too, Mr. Kittelhaus. But it's what William always does. No sooner does a thing come into his head than off he goes and leaves me in the lurch. I've said enough about it, but it does no good.

Kittelhaus

It's always the way with business men, my dear Mrs. Dreissiger.

WEINHOLD

I'm almost certain that something has happened downstairs.

DREISSIGER *enters, hot and excited.*

DREISSIGER

Well, Rosa, is coffee served?

MRS. DREISSIGER

[*Sulkily.*] Fancy your needing to run away again!

DREISSIGER

[*Carelessly.*] Ah! these are things you don't understand.

KITTELHAUS

Excuse me — has anything happened to annoy you, Mr. Dreissiger?

DREISSIGER

Never a day passes without that, my dear sir. I am accustomed to it. What about that coffee, Rosa?

[MRS. DREISSIGER *goes ill-humouredly and gives one or two violent tugs at the broad embroidered bell-pull.*

DREISSIGER

I wish you had been downstairs just now, Mr. Weinhold. You'd have gained a little experience. Besides . . . But now let us have our game of whist.

KITTELHAUS

By all means, sir. Shake off the dust and burden of the day, Mr. Dreissiger; forget it in our company.

DREISSIGER

[*Has gone to the window, pushed aside a curtain, and is looking out. Involuntarily.*] Vile rabble!! Come here, Rosa! [*She goes to the window.*] Look . . . that tall red-haired fellow there! . . .

KITTELHAUS

That's the man they call Red Becker.

DREISSIGER

Is he the man that insulted you the day before yesterday? You remember what you told me — when John was helping you into the carriage?

MRS. DREISSIGER

[*Pouting, drawls.*] I'm sure I don't know.

DREISSIGER

Come now, drop that offended air! I must know. I am thoroughly tired of their impudence. If he's the man, I mean to have him arrested. [*The strains of the Weavers' Song are heard.*] Listen to that! Just listen!

KITTELHAUS

[*Highly incensed.*] Is there to be no end to this nuisance? I must acknowledge now that it is time

for the police to interfere. Permit me. [*He goes forward to the window.*] See, see, Mr. Weinhold! These are not only young people. There are numbers of steady-going old weavers among them, men whom I have known for years and looked upon as most deserving and God-fearing. There they are, taking part in this unheard-of mischief, trampling God's law under foot. Do you mean to tell me that you still defend these people?

Weinhold

Certainly not, Mr. Kittelhaus. That is, sir . . . *cum grano salis.* For after all, they are hungry and they are ignorant. They are giving expression to their dissatisfaction in the only way they understand. I don't expect that such people . . .

Mrs. Kittelhaus

[*Short, thin, faded, more like an old maid than a married woman.*] Mr. Weinhold, Mr. Weinhold, how can you?

Dreissiger

Mr. Weinhold, I am sorry to be obliged to . . . I didn't bring you into my house to give me lectures on philanthropy, and I must request that you will confine yourself to the education of my boys, and leave my other affairs entirely to me — entirely! Do you understand?

Weinhold

[*Stands for a moment rigid and deathly pale, then bows, with a strained smile. In a low voice.*]

Certainly, of course I understand. I have seen this coming. It is my wish too. [*Goes out.*

DREISSIGER

[*Rudely.*] As soon as possible then, please. We require the room.

MRS. DREISSIGER

William, William!

DREISSIGER

Have you lost your senses, Rosa, that you're taking the part of a man who defends a low, blackguardly libel like that song?

MRS. DREISSIGER

But, William, he didn't defend it.

DREISSIGER

Mr. Kittelhaus, did he defend it or did he not?

KITTELHAUS

His youth must be his excuse, Mr. Dreissiger.

MRS. KITTELHAUS

I can't understand it. The young man comes of such a good, respectable family. His father held a public appointment for forty years, without a breath on his reputation. His mother was overjoyed at his getting this good situation here. And now . . . he himself shows so little appreciation of it.

PFEIFER

[*Suddenly opens the door leading from the hall and shouts in.*] Mr. Dreissiger, Mr. Dreissiger! they've got him! Will you come, please? They've caught one of 'em.

DREISSIGER

[*Hastily.*] Has some one gone for the police?

PFEIFER

The superintendent's on his way upstairs.

DREISSIGER

[*At the door.*] Glad to see you, sir. We want you here.

[KITTELHAUS *makes signs to the ladies that it will be better for them to retire. He, his wife, and* MRS. DREISSIGER *disappear into the drawing-room.*

DREISSIGER

[*Exasperated, to the* POLICE SUPERINTENDENT, *who has now entered.*] I have at last had one of the ringleaders seized by my dyers. I could stand it no longer — their insolence was beyond all bounds — quite unbearable. I have visitors in my house, and these blackguards dare to . . . They insult my wife whenever she shows herself; my boys' lives are not safe. My visitors run the risk of being jostled and cuffed. Is it possible that in a well-ordered community incessant public insult offered to unoffending people like myself and my family should pass unpunished? If so . . . then

. . . then I must confess that I have other ideas of law and order.

SUPERINTENDENT

[*A man of fifty, middle height, corpulent, full-blooded. He wears cavalry uniform with a long sword and spurs.*] No, no, Mr. Dreissiger . . . certainly not! I am entirely at your disposal. Make your mind easy on the subject. Dispose of me as you will. What you have done is quite right. I am delighted that you have had one of the ringleaders arrested. I am very glad indeed that a day of reckoning has come. There are a few disturbers of the peace here whom I have long had my eye on.

DREISSIGER

Yes, one or two raw lads, lazy vagabonds, that shirk every kind of work, and lead a life of low dissipation, hanging about the public-houses until they've sent their last half-penny down their throats. But I'm determined to put a stop to the trade of these professional blackguards once and for all. It's in the public interest to do so, not only my private interest.

SUPERINTENDENT

Of course it is! Most undoubtedly, Mr. Dreissiger! No one can possibly blame you. And everything that lies in my power . . .

DREISSIGER

The cat-o'-nine tails is what should be taken to the beggarly pack.

SUPERINTENDENT

You're right, quite right. We must institute an example.

KUTSCHE, *the policeman, enters and salutes. The door is open, and the sound of heavy steps stumbling up the stair is heard.*

KUTSCHE

I have to inform you, sir, that we have arrested a man.

DREISSIGER

[*To* SUPERINTENDENT.] Do you wish to see the fellow?

SUPERINTENDENT

Certainly, most certainly. We must begin by having a look at him at close quarters. Oblige me, Mr. Dreissiger, by not speaking to him at present. I'll see to it that you get complete satisfaction, or my name's not Heide.

DREISSIGER

That's not enough for me, though. He goes before the magistrates. My mind's made up.

JAEGER *is led in by five dyers, who have come straight from their work — faces, hands, and clothes stained with dye. The prisoner, his cap set jauntily on the side of his head, presents an appearance of impudent gaiety; he is excited by the brandy he has just drunk.*

JAEGER

Hounds that you are! — Call yourselves working men! — Pretend to be comrades! Before I would do such a thing as lay hands on a mate, I'd see my hand rot off my arm!

[*At a sign from the* SUPERINTENDENT KUTSCHE *orders the dyers to let go their victim.* JAEGER *straightens himself up, quite free and easy. Both doors are guarded.*

SUPERINTENDENT

[*Shouts to* JAEGER.] Off with your cap, lout! [JAEGER *takes it off, but very slowly, still with an impudent grin on his face.*] What's your name?

JAEGER

What's yours? I'm not your swineherd.

[*Great excitement is produced among the audience by this reply.*

DREISSIGER

This is too much of a good thing.

SUPERINTENDENT

[*Changes colour, is on the point of breaking out furiously, but controls his rage.*] We'll see about this afterwards.— Once more, what's your name? [*Receiving no answer, furiously.*] If you don't answer at once, fellow, I'll have you flogged on the spot.

JAEGER

[*Perfectly cheerful, not showing by so much as the twitch of an eyelid that he has heard the* SUPERINTENDENT'S *angry words, calls over the heads of those around him to a pretty servant girl, who has brought in the coffee and is standing open-mouthed with astonishment at the unexpected sight.*] Hillo, Emmy, do you belong to this company now? The sooner you find your way out of it, then, the better. A wind may begin to blow here, an' blow everything away overnight.

[*The girl stares at* JAEGER, *and as soon as she comprehends that it is to her he is speaking, blushes with shame, covers her eyes with her hands, and rushes out, leaving the coffee things in confusion on the table. Renewed excitement among those present.*

SUPERINTENDENT

[*Half beside himself, to* DREISSIGER.] Never in all my long service . . . a case of such shameless effrontery . . . [JAEGER *spits on the floor.*

DREISSIGER

You're not in a stable, fellow! Do you understand?

SUPERINTENDENT

My patience is at an end now. For the last time: What's your name?

[KITTELHAUS, *who has been peering out at the partly opened drawing-room door, listening to what has been going on, can*

no longer refrain from coming forward to interfere. He is trembling with excitement.

KITTELHAUS

His name is Jaeger, sir. Moritz . . . is it not? Moritz Jaeger. [*To* JAEGER.] And, Jaeger, you know me.

JAEGER

[*Seriously.*] You are Pastor Kittelhaus.

KITTELHAUS

Yes, I am your pastor, Jaeger! It was I who received you, a babe in swaddling clothes, into the Church of Christ. From my hands you took for the first time the body of the Lord. Do you remember that, and how I toiled and strove to bring God's Word home to your heart? Is this your gratitude?

JAEGER

[*Like a scolded schoolboy. In a surly voice.*] I paid my half-crown like the rest.

KITTELHAUS

Money, money . . . Do you imagine that the miserable little bit of money . . . Such utter nonsense! I'd much rather you kept your money. Be a good man, be a Christian! Think of what you promised. Keep God's law. Money, money . . .!

JAEGER

I'm a Quaker now, sir. I don't believe in nothing.

KITTELHAUS

Quaker! What are you talking about? Try to behave yourself, and don't use words you don't understand. Quaker, indeed! They are good Christian people, and not heathens like you.

SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Kittelhaus, I must ask you . . . [*He comes between the Pastor and* JAEGER.] Kutsche! tie his hands!

[*Wild yelling outside:* "Jaeger, Jaeger! come out!"

DREISSIGER

[*Like the others, slightly startled, goes instinctively to the window.*] What's the meaning of this next?

SUPERINTENDENT

Oh, I understand well enough. It means that they want to have the blackguard out among them again. But we're not going to oblige them. Kutsche, you have your orders. He goes to the lock-up.

KUTSCHE

[*With the rope in his hand, hesitating.*] By your leave, sir, but it'll not be an easy job. There's a confounded big crowd out there — a pack of raging devils. They've got Becker with them, and the smith . . .

KITTELHAUS

Allow me one more word! — So as not to rouse still worse feeling, would it not be better if we tried

to arrange things peaceably? Perhaps Jaeger will give his word to go with us quietly, or . . .

SUPERINTENDENT

Quite impossible! Think of my responsibility. I couldn't allow such a thing. Come, Kutsche! lose no more time.

JAEGER

[*Putting his hands together, and holding them out.*] Tight, tight, as tight as ever you can! It's not for long.

[KUTSCHE, *assisted by the workmen, ties his hands.*

SUPERINTENDENT

Now off with you, march! [*To* DREISSIGER.] If you feel anxious, let six of the weavers go with them. They can walk on each side of him, I'll ride in front, and Kutsche will bring up the rear. Whoever blocks the way will be cut down.

[*Cries from below:* "Cock-a-doodle-doo-oo-oo! Bow, wow, wow!"

SUPERINTENDENT

[*With a threatening gesture in the direction of the window.*] You rascals, I'll cock-a-doodle-doo and bow-wow you! Forward! March!

[*He marches out first, with drawn sword; the others, with* JAEGER, *follow.*

JAEGER

[*Shouts as he goes.*] An' Mrs. Dreissiger there may play the lady as proud as she likes, but for

all that she's no better than us. Many a hundred times she's served my father with a half-penny-worth of schnapps. Left wheel — march! [*Exit laughing.*

DREISSIGER

[*After a pause, with apparent calmness.*] Well, Mr. Kittelhaus, shall we have our game now? I think there will be no further interruption. [*He lights a cigar, giving short laughs as he does so; when it is lighted, bursts into a regular fit of laughing.*] I'm beginning now to think the whole thing very funny. That fellow! [*Still laughing nervously.*] It really is too comical: first came the dispute at dinner with Weinhold — five minutes after that he takes leave — off to the other end of the world; then this affair crops up — and now we'll proceed with our whist.

KITTELHAUS

Yes, but . . . [*Roaring is heard outside.*] Yes, but . . . that's a terrible uproar they're making outside.

DREISSIGER

All we have to do is to go into the other room; it won't disturb us in the least there.

KITTELHAUS

[*Shaking his head.*] I wish I knew what has come over these people. In so far I must agree with Mr. Weinhold, or at least till quite lately I was of his opinion, that the weavers were a patient,

humble, easily-led class. Was it not your idea of them, too, Mr. Dreissiger?

DREISSIGER

Most certainly that is what they used to be — patient, easily managed, well-behaved and orderly people. They were that as long as these so-called humanitarians let them alone. But for ever so long now they've had the awful misery of their condition held up to them. Think of all the societies and associations for the alleviation of the distress among the weavers. At last the weaver believes in it himself, and his head's turned. Some of them had better come and turn it back again, for now he's fairly set a-going there's no end to his complaining. This doesn't please him, and that doesn't please him. He must have everything of the best.

[*A loud roar of "Hurrah!" is heard from the crowd.*

KITTELHAUS

So that with all their humanitarianism they have only succeeded in almost literally turning lambs over night into wolves.

DREISSIGER

I won't say that, sir. When you take time to think of the matter coolly, it's possible that some good may come of it yet. Such occurrences as this will not pass unnoticed by those in authority, and may lead them to see that things can't be allowed to go on as they are doing — that means must be

taken to prevent the utter ruin of our home industries.

KITTELHAUS

Possibly. But what is the cause, then, of this terrible falling off of trade?

DREISSIGER

Our best markets have been closed to us by the heavy import duties foreign countries have laid on our goods. At home the competition is a struggle of life and death, for we have no protection, none whatever.

PFEIFER

[*Staggers in, pale and breathless.*] Mr. Dreissiger, Mr. Dreissiger!

DREISSIGER

[*In the act of walking into the drawing-room, turns round, annoyed.*] Well, Pfeifer, what now?

PFEIFER

Oh, sir! Oh, sir! . . . It's worse than ever!

DREISSIGER

What are they up to next?

KITTELHAUS

You're really alarming us — what is it?

PFEIFER

[*Still confused.*] I never saw the like. Good Lord — The superintendent himself . . . they'll catch it for this yet.

DREISSIGER

What's the matter with you, in the devil's name? Is any one's neck broken?

PFEIFER

[*Almost crying with fear, screams.*] They've set Moritz Jaeger free — they've thrashed the superintendent and driven him away — they've thrashed the policeman and sent him off too — without his helmet . . . his sword broken . . . Oh dear, oh dear!

DREISSIGER

I think you've gone crazy, Pfeifer.

KITTELHAUS

This is actual riot.

PFEIFER

[*Sitting on a chair, his whole body trembling.*] It's turning serious, Mr. Dreissiger! Mr. Dreissiger, it's serious now!

DREISSIGER

Well, if that's all the police . . .

PFEIFER

Mr. Dreissiger, it's serious now!

DREISSIGER

Damn it all, Pfeifer, will you hold your tongue?

MRS. DREISSIGER

[*Coming out of the drawing-room with* MRS. KITTELHAUS.] This is really too bad, William. Our whole pleasant evening's being spoiled. Here's Mrs. Kittelhaus saying that she'd better go home.

KITTELHAUS

You mustn't take it amiss, dear Mrs. Dreissiger, but perhaps, under the circumstances, it *would* be better . . .

MRS. DREISSIGER

But, William, why in the world don't you go out and put a stop to it?

DREISSIGER

You go and see if you can do it. Try! Go and speak to them! [*Standing in front of the pastor, abruptly.*] Am I such a tyrant? Am I a cruel master?

Enter JOHN *the coachman.*

JOHN

If you please, m'm, I've put to the horses. Mr. Weinhold's put Georgie and Charlie into the carriage. If it comes to the worst, we're ready to be off.

Mrs. Dreissiger

If what comes to the worst?

John

I'm sure I don't know, m'm. But I'm thinkin' this way: The crowd's gettin' bigger and bigger, an' they've sent the superintendent an' the p'liceman to the right-about.

Pfeifer

It's gettin' serious now, Mr. Dreissiger! It's serious!

Mrs. Dreissiger

[*With increasing alarm.*] What's going to happen? — What do the people want? — They're never going to attack us, John?

John

There's some rascally hounds among 'em, ma'am.

Pfeifer

It's serious now! serious!

Dreissiger

Hold your tongue, fool! — Are the doors barred?

Kittelhaus

I ask you as a favour, Mr. Dreissiger . . . as a favour . . . I am determined to . . . I ask you as a favour . . . [*To* John.] What demands are the people making?

JOHN

[*Awkwardly.*] It's higher wages they're after, the blackguards.

KITTELHAUS

Good, good! — I shall go out and do my duty. I shall speak seriously to these people.

JOHN

Oh sir, please sir, don't do any such thing. Words is quite useless.

KITTELHAUS

One little favour, Mr. Dreissiger. May I ask you to post men behind the door, and to have it closed at once after me?

MRS. KITTELHAUS

O Joseph, Joseph! you're not really going out?

KITTELHAUS

I am. Indeed I am. I know what I'm doing. Don't be afraid. God will protect me.

[MRS. KITTELHAUS *presses his hand, draws back, and wipes tears from her eyes.*

KITTELHAUS

[*While the dull murmur of a great, excited crowd is heard uninterruptedly outside.*] I'll go . . . I'll go out as if I were simply on my way home. I shall see if my sacred office . . . if the people have not sufficient respect for me left to

. . . I shall try . . . [*He takes his hat and stick.*] Forward, then, in God's name!

[*Goes out accompanied by* Dreissiger, Pfeifer *and* John.

Mrs. Kittelhaus

Oh, dear Mrs. Dreissiger! [*She bursts into tears and embraces her.*] I do trust nothing will happen to him.

Mrs. Dreissiger

[*Absently.*] I don't know how it is, Mrs. Kittelhaus, but I . . . I can't tell you how I feel. I didn't think such a thing was possible. It's . . . it's as if it was a sin to be rich. If I had been told about all this beforehand, Mrs. Kittelhaus, I don't know but what I would rather have been left in my own humble position.

Mrs. Kittelhaus

There are troubles and disappointments in every condition of life, Mrs. Dreissiger.

Mrs. Dreissiger

True, true, I can well believe that. And suppose we have more than other people . . . goodness me! we didn't steal it. It's been honestly got, every penny of it. It's not possible that the people can be goin' to attack us! If trade's bad, that's not William's fault, is it?

[*A tumult of roaring is heard outside. While the two women stand gazing at each other, pale and startled,* Dreissiger *rushes in.*

DREISSIGER

Quick, Rosa — put on something, and get into the carriage. I'll be after you this moment.

[*He rushes to the strong-box, and takes out papers and various articles of value.*

Enter JOHN.

JOHN

We're ready to start. But come quickly, before they gets round to the back door.

MRS. DREISSIGER

[*In a transport of fear, throwing her arms around* JOHN's *neck.*] John, John, dear, good John! Save us, John. Save my boys! Oh, what is to become of us?

DREISSIGER

Rosa, try to keep your head. Let John go.

JOHN

Yes, yes, ma'am! Don't you be frightened. Our good horses'll soon leave them all behind; an' whoever doesn't get out of the way'll be driven over.

MRS. KITTELHAUS

[*In helpless anxiety.*] But my husband . . . my husband? But, Mr. Dreissiger, my husband?

DREISSIGER

He's in safety now, Mrs. Kittelhaus. Don't alarm yourself; he's all right.

Mrs. Kittelhaus

Something dreadful has happened to him. I know it. You needn't try to keep it from me.

Dreissiger

You mustn't take it to heart — they'll be sorry for it yet. I know exactly whose fault it was. Such an unspeakable, shameful outrage will not go unpunished. A community laying hands on its own pastor and maltreating him — abominable! Mad dogs they are — raging brutes — and they'll be treated as such. [*To his wife who still stands petrified.*] Go, Rosa, go quickly! [*Heavy blows at the lower door are heard.*] Don't you hear? They've gone stark mad! [*The clatter of window-panes being smashed on the ground-floor is heard.*] They've gone crazy. There's nothing for it but to get away as fast as we can.

[*Cries of* "Pfeifer, come out!"—"We want Pfeifer!"—"Pfeifer, come out!" *are heard.*

Mrs. Dreissiger

Pfeifer, Pfeifer, they want Pfeifer!

Pfeifer

[*Dashes in.*] Mr. Dreissiger, there are people at the back gate already, and the house door won't hold much longer. The smith's battering at it like a maniac with a stable pail.

[*The cry sounds louder and clearer:* "Pfeifer! Pfeifer! Pfeifer! come out!" Mrs. Dreissiger *rushes off as if pursued.*

Mrs. Kittelhaus *follows.* Pfeifer *listens, and changes colour as he hears what the cry is. A perfect panic of fear seizes him; he weeps, entreats, whimpers, writhes, all at the same moment. He overwhelms* Dreissiger *with childish caresses, strokes his cheeks and arms, kisses his hands, and at last, like a drowning man, throws his arms round him and prevents him moving.*

Pfeifer

Dear, good, kind Mr. Dreissiger, don't leave me behind. I've always served you faithfully. I've always treated the people well. I couldn't give 'em more wages than the fixed rate. Don't leave me here — they'll do for me! If they finds me, they'll kill me. O God! O God! My wife, my children!

Dreissiger

[*Making his way out, vainly endeavouring to free himself from* Pfeifer's *clutch.*] Can't you let me go, fellow? It'll be all right; it'll be all right.

For a few seconds the room is empty. Windows are shattered in the drawing-room. A loud crash resounds through the house, followed by a roaring "Hurrah!" *For an instant there is silence. Then gentle, cautious steps are heard on the stair, then timid, hushed ejaculations:* "To the left!"—"Up with you!"—"Hush!"—"Slow, slow!"—"Don't shove like that!"—"It's a wedding we're goin' to!"—"Stop that crowdin'!"—"You go first!"—"No, you go!"

Young weavers and weaver girls appear at the door leading from the hall, not daring to enter, but each trying to shove the other in. In the course of a few moments their timidity is overcome, and the poor, thin, ragged or patched figures, many of them sickly-looking, disperse themselves through Dreissiger's *room and the drawing-room, first gazing timidly and curiously at everything, then beginning to touch things. Girls sit down on the sofas, whole groups admire themselves in the mirrors, men stand up on chairs, examine the pictures and take them down. There is a steady influx of miserable-looking creatures from the hall.*

First Old Weaver

[*Entering.*] No, no, this is carryin' it too far. They've started smashin' things downstairs. There's no sense nor reason in that. There'll be a bad end to it. No man in his wits would do that. I'll keep clear of such goings on.

Jaeger, Becker, Wittig *carrying a wooden pail,* Baumert, *and a number of other old and young weavers, rush in as if in pursuit of something, shouting hoarsely.*

Jaeger

Where has he gone?

Becker

Where's the cruel brute?

BAUMERT

If we can eat grass he may eat sawdust.

WITTIG

We'll hang him when we catch him.

FIRST YOUNG WEAVER

We'll take him by the legs and fling him out at the window, on to the stones. He'll never get up again.

SECOND YOUNG WEAVER

[*Enters.*] He's off!

ALL

Who?

SECOND YOUNG WEAVER

Dreissiger.

BECKER

Pfeifer too?

VOICES

Let's get hold o' Pfeifer! Look for Pfeifer!

BAUMERT

Yes, yes! Pfeifer! Tell him there's a weaver here for him to starve. [*Laughter.*

JAEGER

If we can't lay hands on that brute Dreissiger himself . . . we'll make him poor!

BAUMERT

As poor as a church mouse . . . we'll see to that!

[*All, bent on the work of destruction, rush towards the drawing-room door.*

BECKER

[*Who is leading, turns round and stops the others.*] Halt! Listen to me! This is nothing but a beginnin'. When we're done here, we'll go straight to Bielau, to Dittrich's, where the steam power-looms is. The whole mischief's done by them factories.

OLD ANSORGE

[*Enters from hall. Takes a few steps, then stops and looks round, scarcely believing his eyes; shakes his head, taps his forehead.*] Who am I? Weaver Anton Ansorge. Has he gone mad, Old Ansorge? My head's goin' round like a humming-top, sure enough. What's he doin' here. He'll do whatever he's a mind to. Where is Ansorge? [*He taps his forehead repeatedly.*] Something's wrong! I'm not answerable! I'm off my head! Off with you, off with you, rioters that you are! Heads off, legs off, hands off! If you takes my house, I takes your house. Forward, forward!

[*Goes yelling into the drawing-room, followed by a yelling, laughing mob.*

END OF THE FOURTH ACT

THE FIFTH ACT

Langen-Bielau.— Old Weaver Hilse's *work-room. On the left a small window, in front of which stands the loom. On the right a bed, with a table pushed close to it. Stove, with stove-bench, in the right-hand corner. Family worship is going on.* Hilse, *his old, blind, and almost deaf wife, his son* Gottlieb, *and* Luise, Gottlieb's *wife, are sitting at the table, on the bed and wooden stools. A winding-wheel and bobbins on the floor between table and loom. Old spinning, weaving, and winding implements are disposed of on the smoky rafters; hanks of yarn are hanging down. There is much useless lumber in the low narrow room. The door, which is in the back wall, and leads into the big outer passage, or entry-room of the house, stands open. Through another open door on the opposite side of the passage, a second, in most respects similar weaver's room is seen. The large passage, or entry-room of the house, is paved with stone, has damaged plaster, and a tumble-down wooden stair-case leading to the attics; a washing-tub on a stool is partly visible; linen of the most miserable description and poor household utensils lie about untidily. The light falls from the left into all three apartments.*

Old Hilse *is a bearded man of strong build, but bent and wasted with age, toil, sickness, and hardship. He is an old soldier, and has lost an arm. His nose is sharp, his complexion ashen-grey, and he shakes; he is nothing but skin and bone, and has the deep-set, sore weaver's eyes.*

Old Hilse

[*Stands up, as do his son and daughter-in-law; prays.*] O Lord, we know not how to be thankful enough to Thee, for that Thou hast spared us this night again in Thy goodness . . . an' hast had pity on us . . . an' hast suffered us to take no harm. Thou art the All-merciful, an' we are poor, sinful children of men — that bad that we are not worthy to be trampled under Thy feet. Yet Thou art our loving Father, an' Thou will look upon us an' accept us for the sake of Thy dear Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "Jesus' blood and righteousness, Our covering is and glorious dress." An' if we're sometimes too sore cast down under Thy chastening — when the fire of Thy purification burns too ragin' hot — oh, lay it not to our charge; forgive us our sin. Give us patience, heavenly Father, that after all these sufferin's we may be made partakers of Thy eternal blessedness. Amen.

Mother Hilse

[*Who has been bending forward, trying hard to hear.*] What a beautiful prayer you do say, father!

[Luise *goes off to the wash-tub,* Gottlieb

to the room on the other side of the passage.

Old Hilse

Where's the little lass?

Luise

She's gone to Peterswaldau, to Dreissiger's. She finished all she had to wind last night.

Old Hilse

[*Speaking very loud.*] You'd like the wheel now, mother, eh?

Mother Hilse

Yes, father, I'm quite ready.

Old Hilse

[*Setting it down before her.*] I wish I could do the work for you.

Mother Hilse

An' what would be the good o' that, father? There would I be, sittin' not knowin' what to do.

Old Hilse

I'll give your fingers a wipe, then, so that they'll not grease the yarn.

[*He wipes her hands with a rag.*

Luise

[*At her tub.*] If there's grease on her hands, it's not from what she's eaten.

Old Hilse

If we've no butter, we can eat dry bread — when we've no bread, we can eat potatoes — when there's no potatoes left, we can eat bran.

Luise

[*Saucily.*] An' when that's all eaten, we'll do as the Wenglers did — we'll find out where the skinner's buried some stinking old horse, an' we'll dig it up an' live for a week or two on rotten carrion — how nice that'll be!

Gottlieb

[*From the other room.*] There you are, lettin' that tongue of yours run away with you again.

Old Hilse

You should think twice, lass, before you talk that godless way. [*He goes to his loom, calls.*] Can you give me a hand, Gottlieb? — there's a few threads to pull through.

Luise

[*From her tub.*] Gottlieb, you're wanted to help father.

[Gottlieb *comes in, and he and his father set themselves to the troublesome task of "drawing and slaying," that is, pulling the strands of the warp through the "heddles" and "reed" of the loom. They have hardly begun to do this when* Hornig *appears in the outer room.*

HORNIG

[*At the door.*] Good luck to your work!

HILSE AND HIS SON

Thank you, Hornig.

OLD HILSE

I say, Hornig, when do you take your sleep? You're on your rounds all day, an' on watch all night.

HORNIG

Sleep's gone from me nowadays.

LUISE

Glad to see you, Hornig!

OLD HILSE

An' what's the news?

HORNIG

It's queer news this mornin'. The weavers at Peterswaldau has taken the law into their own hands, an' chased Dreissiger an' his whole family out of the place.

LUISE

[*Perceptibly agitated.*] Hornig's at his lies again.

HORNIG

No, missus, not this time, not to-day.— I've some beautiful pinafores in my cart.— No, it's

God's truth I'm tellin' you. They've sent him to the right-about. He came down to Reichenbach last night, but, Lord love you! they daren't take him in there, for fear of the weavers — off he had to go again, all the way to Schweidnitz.

OLD HILSE

[*Has been carefully lifting threads of the web and approaching them to the holes, through which, from the other side,* GOTTLIEB *pushes a wire hook, with which he catches them and draws them through.*] It's about time you were stoppin' now, Hornig!

HORNIG

It's as sure as I'm a livin' man. Every child in the place'll soon tell you the same story.

OLD HILSE

Either your wits are a-wool-gatherin' or mine are.

HORNIG

Not mine. What I'm tellin' you's as true as the Bible. I wouldn't believe it myself if I hadn't stood there an' seen it with my own eyes — as I see you now, Gottlieb. They've wrecked his house from the cellar to the roof. The good china came flyin' out at the garret windows, rattlin' down the roof. God only knows how many pieces of fustian are lying soakin' in the river! The water can't get away for them — it's running over the banks, the colour of washin'-blue with all the indigo they've poured out at the windows. Clouds of

sky-blue dust was flyin' along. Oh, it's a terrible destruction they've worked! And it's not only the house . . . it's the dye-works too . . . an' the stores! They've broken the stair rails, they've torn up the fine flooring — smashed the lookin'-glasses — cut an' hacked an' torn an' smashed the sofas an' the chairs.—— It's awful — it's worse than war.

OLD HILSE

An' you would have me believe that my fellow weavers did all that?

[*He shakes his head incredulously.*

[*Other tenants of the house have collected at the door and are listening eagerly.*

HORNIG

Who else, I'd like to know? I could put names to every one of 'em. It was me took the sheriff through the house, an' I spoke to a whole lot of 'em, an' they answered me back quite friendly like. They did their business with little noise, but my word! they did it well. The sheriff spoke to 'em, and they answered him mannerly, as they always do. But there wasn't no stoppin' of them. They hacked on at the beautiful furniture as if they was workin' for wages.

OLD HILSE

You took the sheriff through the house?

HORNIG

An' what would I be frightened of? Every one knows me. I'm always turnin' up, like a bad

penny. But no one has anything agin' me. They're all glad to see me. Yes, I went the rounds with him, as sure as my name's Hornig. An' you may believe me or not as you like, but my heart's sore yet from the sight — an' I could see by the sheriff's face that he felt queer enough too. For why? Not a livin' word did we hear — they was doin' their work and holdin' their tongues. It was a solemn an' a woeful sight to see the poor starvin' creatures for once in a way takin' their revenge.

LUISE

[*With irrepressible excitement, trembling, wiping her eyes with her apron.*] An' right they are! It's only what should be!

VOICES AMONG THE CROWD AT THE DOOR

"There's some of the same sort here."— "There's one no farther away than across the river."— "He's got four horses in his stable an' six carriages, an' he starves his weavers to keep 'em."

OLD HILSE

[*Still incredulous.*] What was it set them off?

HORNIG

Who knows? who knows? One says this, another says that.

OLD HILSE

What do they say?

HORNIG

The story as most of 'em tells is that it began with Dreissiger sayin' that if the weavers was hungry they might eat grass. But I don't rightly know.

[*Excitement at the door, as one person repeats this to the other, with signs of indignation.*

OLD HILSE

Well now, Hornig — if you was to say to me: Father Hilse, says you, you'll die to-morrow, I would answer back: That may be — an' why not? You might even go to the length of saying: You'll have a visit to-morrow from the King of Prussia. But to tell me that weavers, men like me an' my son, have done such things as that —— never! I'll never in this world believe it.

MIELCHEN

[*A pretty girl of seven, with long, loose flaxen hair, carrying a basket on her arm, comes running in, holding out a silver spoon to her mother.*] Mammy, mammy! look what I've got! An' you're to buy me a new frock with it.

LUISE

What d'you come tearing in like that for, girl? [*With increased excitement and curiosity.*] An' what's that you've got hold of now? You've been runnin' yourself out o' breath, an' there — if the bobbins aren't in her basket yet? What's all this about?

Old Hilse

Mielchen, where did that spoon come from?

Luise

She found it, maybe.

Hornig

It's worth its seven or eight shillin's at least.

Old Hilse

[*In distressed excitement.*] Off with you, lass — out of the house this moment — unless you want a lickin'! Take that spoon back where you got it from. Out you go! Do you want to make thieves of us all, eh? I'll soon drive that out o' you.

[*He looks round for something to beat her with.*

Mielchen

[*Clinging to her mother's skirts, crying.*] No, grandfather, no! don't lick me! We — we *did* find it. All the other bob — bobbin . . . girls has . . . has some too.

Luise

[*Half frightened, half excited.*] I was right, you see. She found it. Where did you find it, Mielchen?

Mielchen

[*Sobbing.*] At — at Peterswal — dau. We — we found them in front of — in front of Drei — Dreissiger's house.

Old Hilse

This is worse an' worse! Get off with you this moment, unless you want me to help you.

Mother Hilse

What's all the to-do about?

Hornig

I'll tell you what, father Hilse. The best way'll be for Gottlieb to put on his coat an' take the spoon to the police-office.

Old Hilse

Gottlieb, put on your coat.

Gottlieb

[*Pulling it on, eagerly.*] Yes, an' I'll go right in to the office an' say they're not to blame us for it, for how c'n a child like that understand about it? an' I brought the spoon back at once. Stop your crying now, Mielchen!

[*The crying child is taken into the opposite room by her mother, who shuts her in and comes back.*

Hornig

I believe it's worth as much as nine shillin's.

Gottlieb

Give us a cloth to wrap it in, Luise, so that it'll take no harm. To think of the thing bein' worth all that money!

[*Tears come into his eyes while he is wrapping up the spoon.*

LUISE

If it was only ours, we could live on it for many a day.

OLD HILSE

Hurry up, now! Look sharp! As quick as ever you can. A fine state o' matters, this! Get that devil's spoon out o' the house.

[GOTTLIEB *goes off with the spoon.*

HORNIG

I must be off now too.

[*He goes, is seen talking to the people in the entry-room before he leaves the house.*

SURGEON SCHMIDT

[*A jerky little ball of a man, with a red, knowing face, comes into the entry-room.*] Good-morning, all! These are fine goings on! Take care! take care! [*Threatening with his finger.*] You're a sly lot — that's what you are. [*At* HILSE's *door without coming in.*] Morning, father Hilse. [*To a woman in the outer room.*] And how are the pains, mother? Better, eh? Well, well. And how's all with you, father Hilse? [*Enters.*] Why the deuce! what's the matter with mother?

LUISE

It's the eye veins, sir — they've dried up, so as she can't see at all now.

SURGEON SCHMIDT

That's from the dust and weaving by candle-light. Will you tell me what it means that all Peterswaldau's on the way here? I set off on my rounds this morning as usual, thinking no harm; but it wasn't long till I had my eyes opened. Strange doings these! What in the devil's name has taken possession of them, Hilse? They're like a pack of raging wolves. Riot — why, it's revolution! they're getting refractory — plundering and laying waste right and left . . . Mielchen! where's Mielchen? [MIELCHEN, *her face red with crying, is pushed in by her mother.*] Here, Mielchen, put your hand into my coat pocket. [MIELCHEN *does so.*] The ginger-bread nuts are for you. Not all at once, though, you baggage! And a song first! The fox jumped up on a . . . come, now . . . The fox jumped up . . . on a moonlight . . . Mind, I've heard what you did. You called the sparrows on the churchyard hedge a nasty name, and they're gone and told the pastor. Did any one ever hear the like? Fifteen hundred of them agog — men, women, and children. [*Distant bells are heard.*] That's at Reichenbach — alarm-bells! Fifteen hundred people! Uncomfortably like the world coming to an end!

OLD HILSE

An' is it true that they're on their way to Bielau?

SURGEON SCHMIDT

That's just what I'm telling you. I've driven through the middle of the whole crowd. What I'd

have liked to do would have been to get down and give each of them a pill there and then. They were following on each other's heels like misery itself, and their singing was more than enough to turn a man's stomach. I was nearly sick, and Frederick was shaking on the box like an old woman. We had to take a stiff glass at the first opportunity. I wouldn't be a manufacturer, not though I could drive my carriage and pair. [*Distant singing.*] Listen to that! It's for all the world as if they were beating at some broken old boiler. We'll have them here in five minutes, friends. Good-bye! Don't you be foolish. The troops will be upon them in no time. Keep your wits about you. The Peterswaldau people have lost theirs. [*Bells ring close at hand.*] Good gracious! There are our bells ringing too! Every one's going mad. — [*He goes upstairs.*

Gottlieb

[*Comes back. In the entry-room, out of breath.*] I've seen 'em, I've seen 'em! [*To a woman.*] They're here, auntie, they're here! [*At the door.*] They're here, father, they're here! They've got bean-poles, an' ox-goads, an' axes. They're standin' outside the upper Dittrich's kickin' up an awful row. I think he's payin' 'em money. O Lord! whatever's goin' to happen? What a crowd! Oh, you never saw such a crowd! Dash it all — if once they makes a rush, our manufacturers'll be hard put to it.

Old Hilse

What have you been runnin' like that for? You'll go racin' till you bring on your old trou-

ble, and then we'll have you on your back again, strugglin' for breath.

GOTTLIEB

[*Almost joyously excited.*] I had to run, or they would ha' caught me an' kept me. They was all roarin' to me to join 'em. Father Baumert was there too, and says he to me: You come an' get your sixpence with the rest — you're a poor starvin' weaver too. An' I was to tell you, father, from him, that you was to come an' help to pay out the manufacturers for their grindin' of us down. [*Passionately.*] Other times is comin', he says. There's goin' to be a change of days for us weavers. An' we're all to come an' help to bring it about. We're to have our half-pound o' meat on Sundays, and now and again on a holiday sausage with our cabbage. Yes, things is to be quite different, by what he tells me.

OLD HILSE

[*With repressed indignation.*] An' that man calls hisself your godfather! and he bids you take part in such works o' wickedness? Have nothing to do with them, Gottlieb. They've let themselves be tempted by Satan, an' it's his works they're doin'.

LUISE

[*No longer able to restrain her passionate excitement, vehemently.*] Yes, Gottlieb, get into the chimney corner, an' take a spoon in your hand, an' a dish o' skim milk on your knee, an' put on a petti-

coat an' say your prayers, and then father'll be pleased with you. And *he* sets up to be a man!

[*Laughter from the people in the entry-room.*

Old Hilse

[*Quivering with suppressed rage.*] An' you set up to be a good wife, eh? You calls yourself a mother, an' let your evil tongue run away with you like that? You think yourself fit to teach your girl, you that would egg on your husband to crime an' wickedness?

Luise

[*Has lost all control of herself.*] You an' your piety an' religion — did they serve to keep the life in my poor children? In rags an' dirt they lay, all the four — it didn't as much as keep 'em dry. Yes! I sets up to be a mother, that's what I do — an' if you'd like to know it, that's why I'd send all the manufacturers to hell — because I'm a mother! — Not one of the four could I keep in life! It was cryin' more than breathin' with me from the time each poor little thing came into the world till death took pity on it. The devil a bit you cared! You sat there prayin' and singin', and let me run about till my feet bled, tryin' to get one little drop o' skim milk. How many hundred nights has I lain an' racked my head to think what I could do to cheat the churchyard of my little one? What harm has a baby like that done that it must come to such a miserable end — eh? An' over there at Dittrich's they're bathed in wine an' washed in milk. No! you may talk as you like, but if they begins here, ten horses won't hold me

back. An' what's more — if there's a rush on Dittrich's, you'll see me in the forefront of it — an' pity the man as tries to prevent me — I've stood it long enough, so now you know it.

OLD HILSE

You're a lost soul — there's no help for you.

LUISE

[*Frenzied.*] It's you that there's no help for! Tatter-breeched scarecrows — that's what you are — an' not men at all. Whey-faced gutter-scrapers that take to your heels at the sound of a child's rattle. Fellows that says "thank you" to the man as gives you a hidin'. They've not left that much blood in you as that you can turn red in the face. You should have the whip taken to you, an' a little pluck flogged into your rotten bones.

[*She goes out quickly.*

[*Embarrassed pause.*]

MOTHER HILSE

What's the matter with Liesl, father?

OLD HILSE

Nothin', mother! What should be the matter with her?

MOTHER HILSE

Father, is it only me that's thinkin' it, or is the bells ringin'?

Old Hilse

It'll be a funeral, mother.

Mother Hilse

An' I've got to sit waitin' here yet. Why must I be so long a-dyin', father? [*Pause.*

Old Hilse

[*Leaves his work, holds himself up straight; solemnly.*] Gottlieb! — you heard all your wife said to us. Look here, Gottlieb! [*He bares his breast.*] Here they cut out a bullet as big as a thimble. The King knows where I lost my arm. It wasn't the mice as ate it. [*He walks up and down.*] Before that wife of yours was ever thought of, I had spilled my blood by the quart for King an' country. So let her call what names she likes — an' welcome! It does me no harm — Frightened? Me frightened? What would I be frightened of, will you tell me that? Of the few soldiers, maybe, that'll be comin' after the rioters? Good gracious me! That would be a lot to be frightened at! No, no, lad; I may be a bit stiff in the back, but there's some strength left in the old bones; I've got the stuff in me yet to make a stand against a few rubbishin' bay'nets.— An' if it came to the worst! Willin', willin' would I be to say good-bye to this weary world. Death'd be welcome — welcomer to me to-day than to-morrow. For what is it we leave behind? That old bundle of aches an' pains we call our body, the care an' the oppression we call by the name o' life. We may be glad to get away from it,— But there's something to come after, Gottlieb! — an' if we've

done ourselves out o' that too — why, then it's all over with us!

GOTTLIEB

Who knows what's to come after? Nobody's seen it.

OLD HILSE

Gottlieb! don't you be throwin' doubts on the one comfort us poor people have. Why has I sat here an' worked my treadle like a slave this forty year an' more? — sat still an' looked on at him over yonder livin' in pride an' wastefulness — why? Because I have a better hope, something as supports me in all my troubles. [*Points out at the window.*] You have your good things in this world — I'll have mine in the next. That's been my thought. An' I'm that certain of it — I'd let myself be torn to pieces. Have we not His promise? There's a Day of Judgment comin'; but it's not us as are the judges — no: Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.

[*A cry of "Weavers, come out!" is heard outside the window.*

OLD HILSE

Do what you will for me. [*He seats himself at his loom.*] I stay here.

GOTTLIEB

[*After a short struggle.*] I'm going to work too — come what may. [*Goes out.*

[*The Weavers' Song is heard, sung by hundreds of voices quite close at hand; it sounds like a dull, monotonous wail.*

INMATES OF THE HOUSE

[*In the entry-room.*] "Oh, mercy on us! there they come swarmin' like ants!"—"Where can all these weavers be from?"—"Don't shove like that, I want to see too."—"Look at that great maypole of a woman leadin' on in front!"—"Gracious! they're comin' thicker an' thicker."

HORNIG

[*Comes into the entry-room from outside.*] There's a theayter play for you now! That's what you don't see every day. But you should go up to the other Dittrich's an' look what they've done there. It's been no half work. He's got no house now, nor no factory, nor no wine-cellar, nor nothin'. They're drinkin' out o' the bottles — not so much as takin' the time to get out the corks. One, two, three, an' off with the neck, an' no matter whether they cuts their mouths or not. There's some of 'em runnin' about bleedin' like stuck pigs.— Now they're goin' to do for Dittrich here. [*The singing has stopped.*

INMATES OF THE HOUSE

There's nothin' so very wicked like about them.

HORNIG

You wait a bit! you'll soon see! All they're doin' just now is makin' up their minds where they'll begin. Look, they're inspectin' the palace from every side. Do you see that little stout man there, him with the stable pail? That's the smith from Peterswaldau — an' a dangerous little chap

he is. He batters in the thickest doors as if they were made o' pie-crust. If a manufacturer was to fall into his hands it would be all over with him!

HOUSE INMATES

"That was a crack!"—"There went a stone through the window!"—"There's old Dutterch, shakin' with fright."—"He's hangin' out a board."—"Hangin' out a board?"—"What's written on it?"—"Can't you read?"—"It'd be a bad job for me if I couldn't read!"—"Well, read it, then!"—"'You — shall have — full — satis-faction! You — you shall have full satisfaction.'"

HORNIG

He might ha' spared hisself the trouble — that won't help him. It's something else they've set their minds on here. It's the factories. They're goin' to smash up the power-looms. For it's them that is ruinin' the hand-loom weaver. Even a blind man might see that. No! the good folks knows what they're after, an' no sheriff an' no p'lice superintendent'll bring them to reason — much less a bit of a board. Him as has seen 'em at work already knows what's comin'.

HOUSE INMATES

"Did any one ever see such a crowd!"—"What can *these* be wantin'?"—[*Hastily.*] "They're crossin' the bridge!"—[*Amazedly.*] "They're never comin' over on this side, are they?"—[*In excitement and terror.*] "It's to us they're comin'! They're comin' to us! They're comin' to fetch the weavers out o' their houses!"

[*General flight. The entry-room is empty. A crowd of dirty, dusty rioters rush in, their faces scarlet with brandy and excitement; tattered, untidy-looking, as if they had been up all night. With the shout: "Weavers, come out!" they disperse themselves through the house.* Becker *and several other young weavers, armed with cudgels and poles, come into* Old Hilse's *room. When they see the old man at his loom they start, and cool down a little.*

Becker

Come, father Hilse, stop that. Leave your work to them as wants to work. There's no need now for you to be doin' yourself harm. You'll be well taken care of.

First Young Weaver

You'll never need to go hungry to bed again.

Second Young Weaver

The weaver's goin' to have a roof over his head an' a shirt on his back once more.

Old Hilse

An' what's the devil sendin' you to do now, with your poles an' axes?

Becker

These are what we're goin' to break on Dittrich's back.

SECOND YOUNG WEAVER

We'll heat 'em red hot an' stick 'em down the manufacturers' throats, so as they'll feel for once what burnin' hunger tastes like.

THIRD YOUNG WEAVER

Come along, father Hilse! We'll give no quarter.

SECOND YOUNG WEAVER

No one had mercy on us — neither God nor man. Now we're standin' up for our rights ourselves.

OLD BAUMERT *enters, somewhat shaky on the legs, a newly killed cock under his arm.*

OLD BAUMERT

[*Stretching out his arms.*] My brothers — we're all brothers! Come to my arms, brothers!

[*Laughter.*

OLD HILSE

And that's the state you're in, Willem?

OLD BAUMERT

Gustav, is it you? My poor starvin' friend. Come to my arms, Gustav!

OLD HILSE

[*Mutters.*] Let me alone.

Old Baumert

I'll tell you what, Gustav. It's nothin' but luck that's wanted. You look at me. What do I look like? Luck's what's wanted. Don't I look like a lord? [*Pats his stomach.*] Guess what's in there! There's food fit for a prince in that belly. When luck's with him a man gets roast hare to eat an' champagne wine to drink.— I'll tell you all something: We've made a big mistake — we must help ourselves.

All

[*Speaking at once.*] We must help ourselves, hurrah!

Old Baumert

As soon as we gets the first good bite inside us we're different men. Damn it all! but you feels the power comin' into you till you're like an ox, an' that wild with strength that you hit out right an' left without as much as takin' time to look. Dash it, but it's grand!

Jaeger

[*At the door, armed with an old cavalry sword.*] We've made one or two first-rate attacks.

Becker

We knows how to set about it now. One, two, three, an' we're inside the house. Then, at it like lightnin'— bang, crack, shiver! till the sparks are flyin' as if it was a smithy.

First Young Weaver

It wouldn't be half bad to light a bit o' fire.

Second Young Weaver

Let's march to Reichenbach an' burn the rich folks' houses over their heads!

Jaeger

That would be nothin' but butterin' their bread. Think of all the insurance money they'd get.

[*Laughter.*

Becker

No, from here we'll go to Freiburg, to Tromtra's.

Jaeger

What would you say to givin' all them as holds Government appointments a lesson? I've read somewhere as how all our troubles come from them birocrats, as they calls them.

Second Young Weaver

Before long we'll go to Breslau, for more an' more'll be joinin' us.

Old Baumert

[*To* Hilse.] Won't you take a drop, Gustav?

Old Hilse

I never touches it.

Old Baumert

That was in the old world; we're in a new world to-day, Gustav.

First Young Weaver

Christmas comes but once a year. [*Laughter.*

Old Hilse

[*Impatiently.*] What is it you want in my house, you limbs of Satan?

Old Baumert

[*A little intimidated, coaxingly.*] I was bringin' you a chicken, Gustav. I thought it would make a drop o' soup for mother.

Old Hilse

[*Embarrassed, almost friendly.*] Well, you can tell mother yourself.

Mother Hilse

[*Who has been making efforts to hear, her hand at her ear, motions them off.*] Let me alone. I don't want no chicken soup.

Old Hilse

That's right, mother. An' I want none, an' least of all that sort. An' let me say this much to you, Baumert: The devil stands on his head for joy when he hears the old ones jabberin' and talkin' as if they was infants. An' to you all I say — to every one of you: Me and you, we've got

nothing to do with each other. It's not with my will that you're here. In law an' justice you've no right to be in my house.

A Voice

Him that's not with us is against us.

Jaeger

[*Roughly and threateningly.*] You're on the wrong track, old chap. I'd have you remember that we're not thieves.

A Voice

We're hungry men, that's all.

First Young Weaver

We wants to *live* — that's all. An' so we've cut the rope we was hung up with.

Jaeger

And we was in our right! [*Holding his fist in front of the old man's face.*] Say another word, and I'll give you one between the eyes.

Becker

Come, now, Jaeger, be quiet. Let the old man alone.— What we say to ourselves, father Hilse, is this: Better dead than begin the old life again.

Old Hilse

Have I not lived that life for sixty years an' more?

BECKER

That doesn't help us — there's *got* to be a change.

OLD HILSE

On the Judgment Day.

BECKER

What they'll not give us willingly we're goin' to take by force.

OLD HILSE

By force. [*Laughs.*] You may as well go an' dig your graves at once. They'll not be long showin' you where the force lies. Wait a bit, lad!

JAEGER

Is it the soldiers you're meanin'? We've been soldiers too. We'll soon do for a company or two of 'em.

OLD HILSE

With your tongues, maybe. But supposin' you did — for two that you'd beat off, ten'll come back.

VOICES

[*Call through the window.*] The soldiers are comin! Look out!

[*General, sudden silence. For a moment a faint sound of fifes and drums is heard; in the ensuing silence a short, involuntary exclamation:* "The devil! I'm off!" *followed by general laughter.*

Becker

Who was that? Who speaks of runnin' away?

Jaeger

Which of you is it that's afraid of a few paltry helmets? You have me to command you, and I've been in the trade. I knows their tricks.

Old Hilse

An' what are you goin' to shoot with? Your sticks, eh?

First Young Weaver

Never mind that old chap; he's wrong in the upper storey.

Second Young Weaver

Yes, he's a bit off his head.

Gottlieb

[*Has made his way unnoticed among the rioters; catches hold of the speaker.*] Would you give your impudence to an old man like him?

Second Young Weaver

Let me alone. 'Twasn't anything bad I said.

Old Hilse

[*Interfering.*] Let him jaw, Gottlieb. What would you be meddlin' with him for? He'll soon see who it is that's been off his head to-day, him or me.

BECKER

Are you comin', Gottlieb?

OLD HILSE

No, he's goin' to do no such thing.

LUISE

[*Comes into the entry-room, calls.*] What are you puttin' off your time with prayin' hypocrites like them for? Come quick to where you're wanted! Quick! Father Baumert, run all you can! The major's speakin' to the crowd from horseback. They're to go home. If you don't hurry up, it'll be all over.

JAEGER

[*As he goes out.*] That's a brave husband o' yours.

LUISE

Where is he? I've got no husband!

[*Some of the people in the entry-room sing:*

Once on a time a man so small,
Heigh-ho, heigh!
Set his heart on a wife so tall,
Heigh diddle-di-dum-di!

WITTIG, THE SMITH

[*Comes downstairs, still carrying the stable pail; stops on his way through the entry-room.*]

Come on! all of you that is not cowardly scoundrels! — hurrah!

[*He dashes out, followed by* Luise, Jaeger, *and others, all shouting* "Hurrah!"

Becker

Good-bye, then, father Hilse; we'll see each other again. [*Is going.*

Old Hilse

I doubt that. I've not five years to live, and that'll be the soonest you'll get out.

Becker

[*Stops, not understanding.*] Out o' what, father Hilse?

Old Hilse

Out o' prison — where else?

Becker

[*Laughs wildly.*] Do you think I'd mind that? There's bread to be had there anyhow!

[*Goes out.*

Old Baumert

[*Has been cowering on a low stool, painfully beating his brains; he now gets up.*] It's true, Gustav, as I've had a drop too much. But for all that I knows what I'm about. You think one way in this here matter; I think another. I say Becker's right: even if it ends in chains an' ropes — we'll be better off in prison than at home. You're

cared for there, an' you don't need to starve. I wouldn't have joined 'em, Gustav, if I could ha' let it be; but once in a lifetime a man's got to show what he feels. [*Goes slowly towards the door.*] Good-bye, Gustav. If anything happens, mind you put in a word for me in your prayers.

[*Goes out.*

[*The rioters are now all gone. The entry-room gradually fills again with curious onlookers from the different rooms of the house.* Old Hilse *knots at his web.* Gottlieb *has taken an axe from behind the stove and is unconsciously feeling its edge. He and the old man are silently agitated. The hum and roar of a great crowd penetrate into the room.*

Mother Hilse

The very boards is shakin', father — what's goin' on? What's goin' to happen to us?

[*Pause.*]

Old Hilse

Gottlieb!

Gottlieb

What is it?

Old Hilse

Let that axe alone.

Gottlieb

Who's to split the wood, then?

[*He leans the axe against the stove.*

[*Pause.*]

Mother Hilse

Gottlieb, you listen to what father says to you.

[*Some one sings outside the window:*

Our little man does all that he can,
Heigh-ho, heigh!
At home he cleans the pots an' the pan,
Heigh-diddle-di-dum-di! [*Passes on.*

Gottlieb

[*Jumps up, shakes his clenched fist at the window.*] Beast! Don't drive me crazy!

[*A volley of musketry is heard.*

Mother Hilse

[*Starts and trembles.*] Good Lord! is that thunder again?

Old Hilse

[*Instinctively folding his hands.*] Oh, our Father in heaven! defend the poor weavers, protect my poor brothers. [*A short pause ensues.*

Old Hilse

[*To himself, painfully agitated.*] There's blood flowin' now.

Gottlieb

[*Had started up and grasped the axe when the shooting was heard; deathly pale, almost beside himself with excitement.*] An' am I to lie to heel like a dog still?

A Girl

[*Calls from the entry-room.*] Father Hilse, father Hilse! get away from the window. A bullet's just flown in at ours upstairs. [*Disappears.*

Mielchen

[*Puts her head in at the window, laughing.*] Gran'father, gran'father, they've shot with their guns. Two or three's been knocked down, an' one of 'em's turnin' round and round like a top, an' one's twistin' hisself like a sparrow when its head's bein' pulled of. An' oh, if you saw all the blood that came pourin'—! [*Disappears.*

A Weaver's Wife

Yes, there's two or three'll never get up again.

An Old Weaver

[*In the entry-room.*] Look out! They're goin' to make a rush on the soldiers.

A Second Weaver

[*Wildly.*] Look, look, look at the women! skirts up, an' spittin' in the soldiers' faces already!

A Weaver's Wife

[*Calls in.*] Gottlieb, look at your wife. She's more pluck in her than you. She's jumpin' about in front o' the bay'nets as if she was dancin' to music.

[*Four men carry a wounded rioter through the entry-room. Silence, which is broken*

by some one saying in a distinct voice, "It's weaver Ulbrich." *Once more silence for a few seconds, when the same voice is heard again:* "It's all over with him; he's got a bullet in his ear." *The men are heard climbing the wooden stair. Sudden shouting outside:* "Hurrah, hurrah!"

Voices in the entry-room

"Where did they get the stones from?"—"Yes, it's time you were off!"—"From the new road."—"Ta-ta, soldiers!"—"It's rainin' paving-stones."

[*Shrieks of terror and loud roaring outside, taken up by those in the entry-room. There is a cry of fear, and the house door is shut with a bang.*

Voices in the entry-room

"They're loadin' again."—"They'll fire another volley this minute."—"Father Hilse, get away from that window."

Gottlieb

[*Clutches the axe.*] What! is we mad dogs? Is we to eat powder an' shot now instead o' bread? [*Hesitating an instant: to the old man.*] Would you have me sit here an' see my wife shot? Never! [*As he rushes out.*] Look out! I'm coming!

Old Hilse

Gottlieb, Gottlieb!

MOTHER HILSE

Where's Gottlieb gone?

OLD HILSE

He's gone to the devil.

VOICES FROM THE ENTRY-ROOM

Go away from the window, father Hilse.

OLD HILSE

Not I! Not if you all goes crazy together! [*To* MOTHER HILSE, *with rapt excitement.*] My heavenly Father has placed me here. Isn't that so, mother? Here we'll sit, an' do our bounden duty — ay, though the snow was to go on fire.

[*He begins to weave.*

[*Rattle of another volley.* OLD HILSE, *mortally wounded, starts to his feet and then falls forward over the loom. At the same moment loud shouting of* "Hurrah!" *is heard. The people who till now have been standing in the entry-room dash out, joining in the cry. The old woman repeatedly asks:* "Father, father, what's wrong with you?" *The continued shouting dies away gradually in the distance.* MIELCHEN *comes rushing in.*

MIELCHEN

Gran'father, gran'father, they're drivin' the soldiers out o' the village; they've got into Dittrich's

house, an' they're doin' what they did at Dreissiger's. Gran'father! [*The child grows frightened, notices that something has happened, puts her finger in her mouth, and goes up cautiously to the dead man.*] Gran'father!

MOTHER HILSE

Come now, father, can't you say something? You're frightenin' me.

THE END

THE BEAVER COAT

A THIEVES' COMEDY

LIST OF CHARACTERS

VON WEHRHAHN, *Justice.*

KRUEGER, *Capitalist in a small way.*

DR. FLEISCHER.

PHILIP, *his son.*

MOTES.

MRS. MOTES.

MRS. WOLFF, *Washerwoman.*

JULIUS WOLFF, *her husband.*

LEONTINE } *her daughters.*
ADELAIDE }

WULKOW, *Lighterman.*

GLASENAPP, *Clerk in the Justice's court.*

MITTELDORF, *Constable.*

Scene of the action: anywhere in the neighbourhood of Berlin.

THE FIRST ACT

A small, blue-tinted kitchen with low ceiling; a window at the left; at the right a door of rough boards leading out into the open; in the rear wall an empty casing from which the door has been lifted.— In the left corner a flat oven, above which hang kitchen utensils in a wooden frame; in the right corner oars and other boating implements. Rough, stubby pieces of hewn wood lie in a heap under the window. An old kitchen bench, several stools, etc.— Through the empty casing in the rear a second room is visible. In it stands a high, neatly made bed; above it hang cheap photographs in still cheaper frames, small chromolithographs, etc. A chair of soft wood stands with its back against the bed.— It is winter and moonlight. On the oven a tallow-candle is burning in a candle-stick of tin. LEONTINE WOLFF *has fallen asleep on a stool by the oven and rests her head and arms on it. She is a pretty, fair girl of seventeen in the working garb of a domestic servant. A woolen shawl is tied over her cotton jacket.— For several seconds there is silence. Then someone is heard trying to unlock the door from without. But the key is in the lock and a knocking follows.*

Mrs. Wolff

[*Unseen, from without.*] Adelaide! Adelaide! [*There is no answer and a loud knocking is heard at the window.*] *Are* you goin' to open or not?

Leontine

[*Drowsily.*] No, no, I'm not goin' to be abused that way!

Mrs. Wolff

Open, girl, or I'll come in through the window!
[*She raps violently at the panes.*

Leontine

[*Waking up.*] Oh, it's you, mama! I'm coming now! [*She unlocks the door from within.*

Mrs. Wolff

[*Without laying down a sack which she carries over her shoulder.*] What are *you* doin' here?

Leontine

[*Sleepily.*] Evenin', mama.

Mrs. Wolff

How did you get in here, eh?

Leontine

Well, wasn't the key lyin' on the goat shed?

Mrs. Wolff

But what do you want here at home?

LEONTINE

[*Awkwardly affected and aggrieved.*] So you don't want me to come no more at all?

MRS. WOLFF

Aw, you just go ahead and put on that way! I'm so fond o' that! [*She lets the sack drop from her shoulder.*] You don't know nothin', I s'ppose, about how late it's gettin'? You hurry and go back to your mistress.

LEONTINE

It matters a whole lot, don't it, if I get back there a little too late?

MRS. WOLFF

You want to be lookin' out, y'understand? You see to it that you go, or you'll catch it!

LEONTINE

[*Tearfully and defiantly.*] I ain't goin' back to them people no more, mama!

MRS. WOLFF

[*Astonished.*] Not goin'? . . . [*Ironically.*] Oh, no! That's somethin' quite new!

LEONTINE

Well, I don't *have* to let myself be abused that way!

Mrs. Wolff

[*Busy extracting a piece of venison from the sack.*] So the Kruegers abuse you, do they? Aw, the poor child that you are! — Don't you come round me with such fool talk! A wench like a dragoon . . .! Here, lend a hand with this sack, at the bottom. You can't act more like a fool, eh? You won't get no good out o' me that way! You can't learn lazyin' around, here, at all. [*They hang up the venison on the door.*] Now I tell you for the last time . . .

Leontine

I ain't goin' back to them people, I tell you. I'd jump in the river first!

Mrs. Wolff

See that you don't catch a cold doin' it.

Leontine

I'll jump in the river!

Mrs. Wolff

Go ahead. Let me know about it and I'll give you a shove so you don't miss it.

Leontine

[*Screaming.*] Do I have to stand for that, that I gotta drag in two loads o' wood at night!

Mrs. Wolff

[*In mock astonishment.*] Well, now, that's pretty awful, ain't it? You gotta drag in wood? Such people, I tell you!

LEONTINE

. . . An' I gets twenty crowns for the whole year. I'm to get my hands frost-bitten for that, am I? An' not enough potatoes and herring to go round!

MRS. WOLFF

You needn't go fussin' about that, you silly girl. Here's the key; go, cut yourself some bread. An' when you've had enough, go your way, y'understand? The plum butter's in the top cupboard.

LEONTINE

[*Takes a large loaf of bread from a drawer and cuts some slices.*] An' Juste gets forty crowns a year from the Schulze's an' . . .

MRS. WOLFF

Don't you try to be goin' too fast.— You ain't goin' to stay with them people always; you ain't hired out to 'em forever.— Leave 'em on the first of April, for all I care.— But up to then, you sticks to your place.— Now that you got your Christmas present in your pocket, you want to run away, do you? That's no way. I have dealin's with them people, an' I ain't goin' to have that kind o' thing held against me.

LEONTINE

These bits o' rag that I got on here?

MRS. WOLFF

You're forgettin' the cash you got?

LEONTINE

Yes! Six shillin's. That was a whole lot!

MRS. WOLFF

Cash is cash! You needn't kick.

LEONTINE

But if I can go an' make more?

MRS. WOLFF

Yes, talkin'!

LEONTINE

No, sewin'! I can go in to Berlin and sew cloaks. Emily Stechow's been doin' that ever since New Year.

MRS. WOLFF

Don't come tellin' me about that slattern! I'd like to get my hands on her, that's all. I'd give that crittur a piece o' my mind! You'd like to be promoted into her class, would you? To go sportin' all night with the fellows? Just to be thinkin' o' that makes me feel that I'd like to beat you so you can't hardly stand up.— Now papa's comin' an' you'd better look out!

LEONTINE

If papa thrashes me, I'll run away. I'll see how I can get along!

Mrs. Wolff

Shut up now! Go an' feed the goats. They ain't been milked yet to-night neither. An' give the rabbits a handful o' hay.

Leontine *tries to make her escape. In the door, however, she runs into her father, but slips quickly by him with a perfunctory* Evenin'.

Julius Wolff, *the father, is a shipwright. A tall man, with dull eyes and slothful gestures, about forty-three years old.— He places two long oars, which he has brought in across his shoulder in a corner and silently throws down his shipwright's tools.*

Mrs. Wolff

Did you meet Emil?

Julius *growls.*

Mrs. Wolff

Can't you talk? Yes or no? Is he goin' to come around, eh?

Julius

[*Irritated.*] Go right ahead! Scream all you want to!

Mrs. Wolff

You're a fine, brave fellow, ain't you? An' all the while you forget to shut the door.

JULIUS

[*Closes the door.*] What's up again with Leontine?

MRS. WOLFF

Aw, nothin'.— What kind of a load did Emil have?

JULIUS

Bricks again. What d'you suppose he took in? — But what's up with that girl again?

MRS. WOLFF

Did he have half a load or a whole load?

JULIUS

[*Flying into a rage.*] What's up with the wench, I asks you?

MRS. WOLFF

[*Outdoing him in violence.*] An' I want to know how big a load Emil had — a half or a whole boat full?

JULIUS

That's right! Go on! The whole thing full.

MRS. WOLFF

Sst! Julius!

[*Suddenly frightened she shoots the window latch.*

JULIUS

[*Scared and staring at her, is silent. After a few moments, softly.*] It's a young forester from Rixdorf.

MRS. WOLFF

Go an' creep under the bed, Julius. [*After a pause.*] If only you wasn't such an awful fool. You don't open your mouth but what you act like a regular tramp. You don't understand nothin' o' such things, if you want to know it. You let me look out for the girls. That ain't no part o' your concern. That's a part of my concern. With boys that'd be a different thing. I wouldn't so much as give you advice. But everybody's got their own concerns.

JULIUS

Then don't let her come runnin' straight across my way.

MRS. WOLFF

I guess you want to beat her till she can't walk. Don't you take nothin' like that into your head. Don't you think I'm goin' to allow anythin' like that! *I* let her be beaten black an' blue? We c'n make our fortune with that girl. I wish you had sense about some things!

JULIUS

Well, then let her go an' see how she gets along!

MRS. WOLFF

Nobody needn't be scared about that, Julius. I ain't sayin' but what you'll live to see things.

That girl will be livin' up on the first floor some day and we'll be glad to have her condescend to know us. What is it the doctor said to me? Your daughter, he says, is a handsome girl; she'd make a stir on the stage.

JULIUS

Then let her see about gettin' there.

MRS. WOLFF

You got no education, Julius. You ain't got a trace of it. Lord, if it hadn't been for me! What would ha' become o' those girls! I brought 'em up to be educated, y'understand? Education is the main thing these days. But things don't come off all of a sudden. One thing after another — step by step. Now she's in service an' that'll learn her somethin'. Then maybe, for my part, she can go into Berlin. She's much too young for the stage yet.

[*During* MRS. WOLFF'S *speech repeated knocking has been heard. Now* ADELAIDE'S *voice comes in.* Mama! Mama! Please, do open! MRS. WOLFF *opens the door.* ADELAIDE *comes in. She is a somewhat overgrown schoolgirl of fourteen with a pretty, child-like face. The expression of her eyes, however, betrays premature corruption.*

Why didn't you open the door, mama? I nearly got my hands and feet frozen!

MRS. WOLFF

Don't stand there jabberin' nonsense. Light a fire in the oven and you'll soon be warm. Where've you been all this long time, anyhow?

ADELAIDE

Why, didn't I have to go and fetch the boots for father?

MRS. WOLFF

An' you staid out two hours doin' it!

ADELAIDE

Well, I didn't start to go till seven.

MRS. WOLFF

Oh, you went at seven, did you? It's half past ten now. You don't know that, eh? So you've been gone three hours an' a half. That ain't much. Oh, no. Well now you just listen good to what I've got to tell you. If you go an' stay that long again, and specially with that lousy cobbler of a Fielitz — then watch out an' see! That's all I says.

ADELAIDE

Oh, I guess I ain't to do nothin' except just mope around at home.

MRS. WOLFF

Now you keep still an' don't let me hear no more.

ADELAIDE

An' even if I do go over to Fielitz's sometime . . .

MRS. WOLFF

Are you goin' to keep still, I'd like to know? You teach me to know Fielitz! He needn't be putting on's far as I know. He's got another trade exceptin' just repairin' shoes. When a man's been twice in the penitentiary . . .

ADELAIDE

That ain't true at all . . . That's all just a set o' lies. He told me all about it himself, mama!

MRS. WOLFF

As if the whole village didn't know, you fool girl! That man! I know what he is. He's a pi —

ADELAIDE

Oh, but he's friends even with the justice!

MRS. WOLFF

I don't doubt it. He's a spy. And what's more, he's a *dee*nouncer!

ADELAIDE

What's that — a *dee*nouncer?

JULIUS

[*From the next room, into which he has gone.*] I'm just waitin' to hear two words more.

[Adelaide *turns pale and at once and silently she sets about building a fire in the oven.*

Leontine *comes in.*

Mrs. Wolff

[*Has opened the stag. She takes out the heart, liver, etc., and hands them to* Leontine.] There, hurry, wash that off. An' keep still, or somethin'll happen yet.

[Leontine, *obviously intimidated, goes at her task. The girls whisper together.*

Mrs. Wolff

Say, Julius. What are you doin' in there? I guess you'll go an' forget again. Didn't I tell you this mornin' about the board that's come loose?

Julius

What kind o' board?

Mrs. Wolff

You don't know, eh? Behind there, by the goat-shed. The wind loosened it las' night. You better get out there an' drive a few nails in, y'understand?

Julius

Aw, to-morrow mornin'll be another day, too.

Mrs. Wolff

Oh, no. Don't take to thinkin' that way. We ain't goin' to make that kind of a start — not we.

[Julius *comes into the room growling.*] There, take the hammer! Here's your nails! Now hurry an' get it done.

Julius

You're a bit off your head.

Mrs. Wolff

[*Calling out after him.*] When Wulkow comes what d'you want me to ask?

Julius

About twelve shillin's sure. [*Exit.*

Mrs. Wolff

[*Contemptuously.*] Aw, twelve shillin's. [*A pause.*] Now you just hurry so that papa gets his supper. [*A brief pause.*

Adelaide

[*Looking at the stag.*] What's that anyhow, mama?

Mrs. Wolff

A stork. [*Both girls laugh.*

Adelaide

A stork, eh? A stork ain't got horns. I know what that is — that's a stag!

Mrs. Wolff

Well, if you know why d'you go an' ask?

LEONTINE

Did papa shoot it, mama?

MRS. WOLFF

That's right! Go and scream it through the village: Papa's shot a stag!

ADELAIDE

I'll take mighty good care not to. That'd mean the cop!

LEONTINE

Aw, I ain't scared o' policeman Schulz. He chucked me under the chin onct.

MRS. WOLFF

He c'n come anyhow. We ain't doin' nothin' wrong. If a stag's full o' lead and lays there dyin' an' nobody finds it, what happens? The ravens eat it. Well now, if the ravens eat it or we eat it, it's goin' to be eaten anyhow. [*A brief pause.*] Well now, tell me: You was axed to carry wood in?

LEONTINE

Yes, in this frost! Two loads o' regular clumps! An' that when a person is tired as a dog, at half past nine in the evenin'!

MRS. WOLFF

An' now I suppose that wood is lyin' there in the street?

LEONTINE

It's lyin' in front o' the garden gate. That's all I know.

MRS. WOLFF

Well now, but supposin' somebody goes and steals that wood? What's goin' to happen in the mornin' then?

LEONTINE

I ain't goin' there no more!

MRS. WOLFF

Are those clumps green or dry?

LEONTINE

They're fine, dry ones! [*She yawns again and again.*] Oh, mama, I'm *that* tired! I've just had to work myself to pieces.

[*She sits down with every sign of utter exhaustion.*

MRS. WOLFF

[*After a brief silence.*] You c'n stay at home to-night for all I care. I've thought it all out a bit different. An' to-morrow mornin' we c'n see.

LEONTINE

I've just got as thin as can be, mama! My clothes is just hangin' on to me.

Mrs. Wolff

You hurry now and go in to bed or papa'll raise a row yet. He ain't got no understandin' for things like that.

Adelaide

Papa always speaks so uneducated!

Mrs. Wolff

Well, he didn't learn to have no education. An' that'd be just the same thing with you if I hadn't brought you up to be educated. [*Holding a sauce-pan over the oven: to* Leontine:] Come now, put it in! [Leontine *places the pieces of washed venison into the sauce-pan.*] So, now go to bed.

Leontine

[*Goes into the next room. While she is still visible, she says:*] Oh, mama, Motes has moved away from Krueger.

Mrs. Wolff

I guess he didn't pay no rent.

Leontine

It was just like pullin' a tooth every time, Mr. Krueger says, but he paid. Anyhow, he says, he had to kick him out. He's such a lyin' loud-mouthed fellow, and always so high and mighty toward Mr. Krueger.

Mrs. Wolff

If I had been in Mr. Krueger's place I wouldn't ha' kept him that long.

LEONTINE

Because Mr. Krueger used to be a carpenter onct, that's why Motes always acts so contemptuous. And then, too, he quarrelled with Dr. Fleischer.

MRS. WOLFF

Well, anybody that'll quarrel with *him* . . .! I ain't sayin' anythin', but them people wouldn't harm a fly!

LEONTINE

They won't let him come to the Fleischers no more.

MRS. WOLFF

If you could get a chanct to work for them people some day!

LEONTINE

They treat the girls like they was their own children.

MRS. WOLFF

And his brother in Berlin, he's cashier in a theatre.

WULKOW

[*Has knocked at the door repeatedly and now calls out in a hoarse voice.*] Ain't you goin' to have the kindness to let me in.

MRS. WOLFF

Well, I should say! Why not! Walk right in!

Wulkow

[*Comes in. He is a lighterman on the Spree river, near sixty years old, bent, with a greyish-yellow beard that frames his head from ear to ear but leaves his weather-beaten face free.*] I wish you a very good evenin'.

Mrs. Wolff

Look at him comin' along again to take in a woman a little bit.

Wulkow

I've give up tryin' that this long while!

Mrs. Wolff

Maybe, but that's the way it's goin' to be anyhow.

Wulkow

T'other way roun', you mean.

Mrs. Wolff

What'll it be next? — Here it's hangin'! A grand feller, eh?

Wulkow

I tell you, Julius ought to be lookin' out sharp. They's gettin' to be pretty keen again.

Mrs. Wolff

What are you goin' to give us for it, that's the main thing. What's the use o' jabberin'?

WULKOW

Well, I'm tellin' you. I'm straight from Gruenau. An' there I heard it for certain. They shot Fritz Weber. They just about filled his breeches with lead.

MRS. WOLFF

What are you goin' to give? That's the main thing.

WULKOW

[*Feeling the stag.*] The trouble is I got four o' them bucks lyin' at home now.

MRS. WOLFF

That ain't goin' to make your boat sink.

WULKOW

An' I don't want her to do that. That wouldn't be no joke. But what's the good if I get stuck with the things here. I've gotta get 'em in to Berlin. It's been hard enough work on the river all day, an' if it goes on freezin' this way, there'll be no gettin' along to-morrow. Then I c'n sit in the ice with my boat, an' then I've got these things for fun.

MRS. WOLFF

[*Apparently changing her mind.*] Girl, you run down to Schulze. Say how-dee-do an' he's to come up a while, cause mother has somethin' to sell.

Wulkow

Did I say as I wasn't goin' to buy it?

Mrs. Wolff

It's all the same to me who buys it.

Wulkow

Well, I'm willin' to.

Mrs. Wolff

Any one that don't want it can let it be.

Wulkow

I'll buy this feller! What's he worth?

Mrs. Wolff

[*Touching the venison.*] This here piece weighs a good thirty pounds. Every bit of it, I c'n tell you. Well, Adelaide! You was here. We could hardly lift it up.

Adelaide

[*Who had not been present at all.*] I pretty near sprained myself liftin' it.

Wulkow

Thirteen shillin's will pay for it, then. An' I won't be makin' ten pence on that bargain!

Mrs. Wolff

[*Acts amazed. She busies herself at the oven as though she had forgotten* Wulkow's *presence.*

Then, as though suddenly becoming aware of it again, she says:] I wish you a very pleasant trip.

WULKOW

Well, I can't give more than thirteen!

MRS. WOLFF

That's right. Let it alone.

WULKOW

I'm just buyin' it for the sake o' your custom. God strike me dead, but it's as true as I'm standin' here. I don't make *that* much with the whole business. An' even if I was wantin' to say: fourteen, I'd be puttin' up money, I'd be out one shillin'. But I ain't goin' to let that stand between us. Just so you see my good intentions, I'll say fourteen . . .

I can't give no more. I'm tellin' you facts.

MRS. WOLFF

That's all right! That's all right! We c'n get rid o' this stag. We won't have to keep it till morning.

WULKOW

Yes, if only nobody don't see it hangin' here. Money wouldn't do no good then.

MRS. WOLFF

This stag here, we found it dead.

WULKOW

Yes, in a trap. I believe you.

Mrs. Wolff

You needn't try to get around us that way. That ain't goin' to do *no* good! You want to gobble up everythin' for nothin'! We works till we got no breath. Hours an' hours soakin' in the snow, not to speak o' the risk, there in the pitch dark. That's no joke, I tell you.

Wulkow

The only trouble is that I got four of 'em already. Or I'd say fifteen shillin's quick enough.

Mrs. Wolff

No, Wulkow, we can't do business together today. You c'n be easy an' go a door further. We just dragged ourselves across the lake . . . a hairbreadth an' we would've been stuck in the ice. We couldn't get forward an' we couldn't get backward. You can't give away somethin' you got so hard.

Wulkow

Well, what do I get out of it all, I want to know! This here lighter business ain't a natural thing. An' poachin', that's a bad job. If you all get nabbed, I'd be the first one to fly in. I been worryin' along these forty years. What've I got to-day? The rheumatiz — that's what! When I get up o' mornin's early, I gotta whine like a puppy dog. Years an' years I been wantin' to buy myself a fur-coat. That's what all doctors has advised me to do, because I'm that sensitive. But I ain't been able to buy me none. Not to this day. An' that's as true as I'm standin' here.

ADELAIDE

[*To her mother.*] Did you hear what Leontine said?

WULKOW

But anyhow. Let it go. I'll say sixteen.

MRS. WOLFF

No, it's no good. Eighteen! [*To* ADELAIDE.] What's that you was talkin' about?

ADELAIDE

Mrs. Krueger has bought a fur-coat that cost pretty near a hundred crowns. It's a beaver coat.

WULKOW

A beaver coat?

MRS. WOLFF

Who bought it?

ADELAIDE

Why, Mrs. Krueger, I tell you, as a Christmas present for Mr. Krueger.

WULKOW

Is that girl in service with the Kruegers?

ADELAIDE

Not me, but my sister. I ain't goin' in service like that at all.

WULKOW

Well now, if I could have somethin' like that! That's the kind o' thing I been tryin' to get hold of all this time. I'd gladly be givin' sixty crowns for it. All this money that goes to doctors and druggists, I'd much rather spend it for furs. I'd get some pleasure out of that at least.

MRS. WOLFF

All you gotta do is to go there, Wulkow. Maybe Kruger'll make you a present of the coat.

WULKOW

I don't suppose he'd do it kindly. But's I said: I'm interested in that sort o' thing.

MRS. WOLFF

I believes you. I wouldn't mind havin' a thing like that myself.

WULKOW

How do we stand now? Sixteen?

MRS. WOLFF

Nothin' less'n eighteen'll do. Not under eighteen — that's what Julius said. I wouldn't dare show up with sixteen. No, sir. When that man takes somethin' like that into his head! [JULIUS *comes in.*] Well, Julius, you said eighteen shillin's, didn't you?

Julius

What's that I said?

Mrs. Wolff

Are you hard o' hearin' again for a change? You said yourself: not under eighteen. You told me not to sell the stag for less.

Julius

I said? . . . Oh, yes, that there piece o' venison! That's right. H-m. An' that ain't a bit too much, either.

Wulkow

[*Taking out money and counting it.*] We'll make an end o' this. Seventeen shillin's. Is it a bargain?

Mrs. Wolff

You're a great feller, you are! That's what I said exactly: he don't hardly have to come in the door but a person is taken in!

Wulkow

[*Has unrolled a sack which had been hidden about his person.*] Now help me shoot it right in here. [Mrs. Wolff *helps him place the venison in the sack.*] An' if by some chanst you should come to hear o' somethin' like that — what I means is, just f'r instance — a — fur coat like that, f'r instance. Say, sixty or seventy crowns. I could raise that, an' I wouldn't mind investin' it.

Mrs. Wolff

I guess you ain't right in your head . . .! How should *we* come by a coat like that?

A Man's Voice

[*Calls from without.*] Mrs. Wolff! Oh, Mrs. Wolff! Are you still up?

Mrs. Wolff

[*Sharing the consternation of the others, rapidly, tensely:*] Slip it in! Slip it in! And get in the other room!

[*She crowds them all into the rear room and locks the door.*

A Man's Voice

Mrs. Wolff! Oh, Mrs. Wolff! Have you gone to bed?

Mrs. Wolff *extinguishes the light.*

A Man's Voice

Mrs. Wolff! Mrs. Wolff! Are you still up? [*The voice recedes singing:*]

"Morningre-ed, morningre-ed,
Thou wilt shine when I am dea-ead!"

Leontine

Aw, that's only old "Morningred," mama!

Mrs. Wolff

[*Listens for a while, opens the door softly and listens again. When she is satisfied she closes the*

door and lights the candle. Thereupon she admits the others again.] 'Twas only the constable Mitteldorf.

WULKOW

The devil, you say. That's nice acquaintances for you to have.

MRS. WOLFF

Go on about your way now! Hurry!

ADELAIDE

Mama, Mino has been barkin'.

MRS. WOLFF

Hurry, hurry, Wulkow! Get out now! An' the back way through the vegetable garden! Julius will open for you. Go on, Julius, an' open the gate.

WULKOW

An's I said, if somethin' like such a beaver coat *was* to turn up, why —

MRS. WOLFF

Sure. Just make haste now.

WULKOW

If the Spree don't freeze over, I'll be gettin' back in, say, three or four days from Berlin. An' I'll be lyin' with my boat down there.

Mrs. Wolff

By the big bridge?

Wulkow

Where I always lies. Well, Julius, toddle ahead! . . . [*Exit.*

Adelaide

Mama, Mino has been barkin' again.

Mrs. Wolff

[*At the oven.*] Oh, let him bark!

[*A long-drawn call is heard in the distance.* "' Ferry over!"]

Adelaide

Somebody wants to get across the river, mama!

Mrs. Wolff

Well, go'n tell papa. He's down there by the river.— [" Ferry over!"] An' take him his oars. But he ought to let Wulkow get a bit of a start first.

Adelaide *goes out with the oars. For a little while* Mrs. Wolff *is alone. She works energetically. Then* Adelaide *returns.*

Adelaide

Papa's got his oars down in the boat.

Mrs. Wolff

Who wants to get across the river this time o' night?

Adelaide

I believe, mama, it's that stoopid Motes!

Mrs. Wolff

What? Who is't you say?

Adelaide

I think the voice was Motes's voice.

Mrs. Wolff

[*Vehemently.*] Go down! Run! Tell papa to come up! That fool Motes can stay on the other side. He don't need to come sniffin' around in the house here.

Adelaide *exits.* Mrs. Wolff *hides and clears away everything that could in any degree suggest the episode of the stag. She covers the sauce-pan with an apron.* Adelaide *comes back.*

Adelaide

Mama, I got down there too late. I hear 'em talkin' a'ready.

Mrs. Wolff

Well, who is it then?

ADELAIDE

I've been tellin' you: Motes.

MR. *and* MRS. MOTES *appear in turn in the doorway. Both are of medium height. She is an alert young woman of about thirty, modestly and neatly dressed. He wears a green forester's overcoat; his face is healthy but insignificant; his left eye is concealed by a black bandage.*

MRS. MOTES

[*Calls in.*] We nearly got our noses frozen, Mrs. Wolff.

MRS. WOLFF

Why do you go walkin' at night. You got time enough when it's bright day.

MOTES

It's nice and warm here.— Who's that who has time by day?

MRS. WOLFF

Why, you!

MOTES

I suppose you think I live on my fortune.

MRS. WOLFF

I don't know; I ain't sayin' what you live on.

MRS. MOTES

Heavens, you needn't be so cross. We simply wanted to ask about our bill.

Mrs. Wolff

You've asked about that a good deal more'n once.

Mrs. Motes

Very well. So we're asking again. Anything wrong with that? We have to pay sometime, you know?

Mrs. Wolff

[*Astonished.*] You wants to pay?

Mrs. Motes

Of course, we do. Naturally.

Motes

You act as if you were quite overwhelmed. Did you think we'd run off without paying?

Mrs. Wolff

I ain't given to thinkin' such things. If you want to be so good then. Here, we can arrange right now. The amount is eleven shillin's, six pence.

Mrs. Motes

Oh, yes, Mrs. Wolff. We're going to get money. The people around here will open their eyes wide.

Motes

There's a smell of roasted hare here.

Mrs. Wolff

Burned hair! That'd be more likely.

Motes

Let's take a look and see.

[*He is about to take the cover from the sauce-pan.*

Mrs. Wolff

[*Prevents him.*] No sniffin' 'round in my pots.

Mrs. Motes

[*Who has observed everything distrustfully.*] Mrs. Wolff, we've found something, too.

Mrs. Wolff

I ain't lost nothin'.

Mrs. Motes

There, look at these.

[*She shows her several wire snares.*

Mrs. Wolff

[*Without losing her equanimity in the slightest.*] I suppose them are snares?

Mrs. Motes

We found them quite in the neighbourhood here! Scarcely twenty paces from your garden.

MRS. WOLFF

Lord love you! The amount of poachin' that's done here!

MRS. MOTES

If you were to keep a sharp lookout, you might actually catch the poacher some day.

MRS. WOLFF

Aw, such things is no concern o' mine.

MOTES

If I could just get hold of a rascal like that. First, I'd give him something to remember me by, and then I'd mercilessly turn him over to the police.

MRS. MOTES

Mrs. Wolff, have you got a few fresh eggs?

MRS. WOLFF

Now, in the middle of winter? They're pretty scarce!

MOTES

[*To* JULIUS, *who has just come in.*] Forester Seidel has nabbed a poacher again. He'll be taken to the detention prison to-morrow. There's an officer with style about him. If I hadn't had my misfortune, I could have been a head forester to-day. I'd go after those dogs even more energetically.

Mrs. Wolff

There's many a one has had to pay for doin' that!

Motes

Yes, if he's afraid. I'm not! I've denounced quite a few already. [*Fixing his gaze keenly on* Mrs. Wolff *and her husband in turn.*] And there are a few others whose time is coming. They'll run straight into my grip some day. These setters of snares needn't think that I don't know them. I know them very well.

Mrs. Motes

Have you been baking, perhaps, Mrs. Wolff? We're so tired of baker's bread.

Mrs. Wolff

I thought you was goin' to square your account.

Mrs. Motes

On Saturday, as I've told you, Mrs. Wolff. My husband has been appointed editor of the magazine "Chase and Forest."

Mrs. Wolff

Aha, yes. I know what that means.

Mrs. Motes

But if I assure you, Mrs. Wolff! We've moved away from the Kruegers already.

Mrs. Wolff

Yes, you moved because you had to.

Mrs. Motes

We had to? Hubby, listen to this! — [*She gives a forced laugh.*] — Mrs. Wolff says that we had to move from Kruegers.

Motes

[*Crimson with rage.*] The reason why I moved away from that place? You'll find it out some day. The man is a usurer and a cutthroat!

Mrs. Wolff

I don't know nothin' about that; I can't say nothin' about that.

Motes

I'm just waiting to get hold of positive proof. That man had better be careful where I'm concerned — he and his bosom friend, Dr. Fleischer. The latter more especially. If I just wanted to say it — one word and that man would be under lock and key.

[*From the beginning of his speech on he has gradually withdrawn and speaks the last words from without.*

Mrs. Wolff

I suppose the men got to quarrelin' again?

Mrs. Motes

[*Apparently confidential.*] There's no jesting with my husband. If he determines on anything,

he doesn't let go till it's done. And he stands very well with the justice.— But how about the eggs and the bread?

Mrs. Wolff

[*Reluctantly.*] Well, I happen to have five eggs lyin' here. An' a piece o' bread. [Mrs. Motes *puts the eggs and the half of a loaf into her basket.*] Are you satisfied now?

Mrs. Motes

Certainly; of course. I suppose the eggs are fresh?

Mrs. Wolff

As fresh as my chickens can lay 'em.

Mrs. Motes

[*Hastening in order to catch up with her husband.*] Well, good-night. You'll get your money next Saturday. [*Exit.*

Mrs. Wolff

All right; that'll be all right enough! [*She closes the door and speaks softly to herself.*] Get outta here, you! Got nothin' but debts with everybody around. [*Over her sauce-pan.*] What business o' theirs is it what we eat? Let 'em spy into their own affairs. Go to bed, child!

Adelaide

Good night, mama. [*She kisses her.*

Mrs. Wolff

Well, ain't you goin' to kiss papa good-night?

Adelaide

Good night, papa.

[*She kisses him, at which he growls.* Adelaide, *exit.*

Mrs. Wolff

You always gotta say that to her special!

[*A pause.*

Julius

Why do'you go an' give the eggs to them people?

Mrs. Wolff

I suppose you want me to make an enemy o' that feller? You just go ahead an' get him down on you! I tell you, that's a dangerous feller. He ain't got nothin' to do except spy on people. Come. Sit down. Eat. Here's a fork for you. You don't understand much about such things. You take care o' the things that belongs to you! Did you have to go an' lay the snares right behind the garden? They was yours, wasn't they?

Julius

[*Annoyed.*] Go right ahead!

Mrs. Wolff

An', o' course, that fool of a Motes had to find 'em first thing. Here near the house you ain't

goin' to lay no more snares at all! Y'understan'? Next thing'll be that people say we laid 'em.

JULIUS

Aw, you stop your jawin'. [*Both eat.*

MRS. WOLFF

Look here, Julius, we're out of wood, too.

JULIUS

An' you want me to go this minute, I suppose?

MRS. WOLFF

It'd be best if we got busy right off.

JULIUS

I don't feel my own bones no more. Anybody that wants to go c'n go. I ain't.

MRS. WOLFF

You men folks always does a whole lot o' talkin', an' when it comes to the point, you can't do nothin'. I'd work enough to put the crowd of you in a hole and drag you out again too. If you ain't willin' to go to-night by no means, why, you've got to go to-morrow anyhow. So what good is it? How are the climbin' irons? Sharp?

JULIUS

I loaned 'em to Karl Machnow.

Mrs. Wolff

[*After a pause.*] If only you wasn't such a coward! — We might get a few loads o' wood in a hurry, an' we wouldn't have to work ourselves blue in the face neither. — No, nor we wouldn't have to go very far for 'em.

Julius

Aw, let me eat a bite, will you?

Mrs. Wolff

[*Punches his head amicably.*] Don't always be so rough. I'm goin' to be good to you now for onct. You watch. [*Fetching a bottle of whiskey and showing it to him.*] Here! See? I brought that for you. Now you c'n make a friendly face, all right. [*She fills a glass for her husband.*

Julius

[*Drinks.*] That's fine — in this cold weather — fine.

Mrs. Wolff

Well, you see? Don't I take care o' you?

Julius

That was pretty good, pretty good all right.
[*He fills the glass anew and drinks.*

Mrs. Wolff

[*After a pause. She is splitting kindling wood and eating a bite now and then.*] Wulkow — that

feller — he's a regular rascal —. He always — acts — as if he was hard up.

JULIUS

Aw, he'd better shut up — he with his trade!

MRS. WOLFF

You heard that about the beaver coat, didn't you?

JULIUS

Naw, I didn't hear nothin'.

MRS. WOLFF

[*With assumed carelessness.*] Didn't you hear the girl tell how Mrs. Krueger has given Krueger a fur coat?

JULIUS

Well, them people has the money.

MRS. WOLFF

That's true. An' then Wulkow was sayin' . . . you musta heard . . . that if he could get hold of a coat like that some day, he'd give as much as a seventy crowns for it.

JULIUS

You just let him go and get into trouble his own self.

MRS. WOLFF

[*After a pause, refilling her husband's glass.*] Come now, you c'n stand another.

JULIUS

Well, go ahead, go ahead! What in . . .!

MRS. WOLFF *gets out a little note book and turns over the leaves.*

JULIUS

How much is it we put aside since July?

MRS. WOLFF

About thirty crowns has been paid off.

JULIUS

An' that'll leave . . . leave . . .

MRS. WOLFF

That'll still leave seventy. You don't get along very fast this way. Fifty, sixty crowns — all in a lump; if you could add that onct! Then the lot would be paid for all right. Then maybe we could borrow a couple o' hundred and build up a few pretty rooms. We can't take no summer boarders like this an' it's the summer boarders what brings the money.

JULIUS

Well, go ahead! What are you . . .

MRS. WOLFF

[*Resolutely.*] My, but you're a slow crittur, Julius! Would *you've* gone an' bought that lot? An' if we wanted to go an' sell it now, we could be gettin' twice over what we paid for it! I got

a different kind of a nature! Lord, if you had one like it!

JULIUS

I'm workin' all right. What's the good o' all that?

MRS. WOLFF

You ain't goin' to get very far with all your work.

JULIUS

Well, I can't steal. I can't go an' get into trouble!

MRS. WOLFF

You're just stoopid, an' that's the way you'll always be. Nobody here ain't been talkin' o' stealin'. But if you don't risk nothin', you don't get nothin'. An' when onct you're rich, Julius, an' c'n go and sit in your own carridge, there ain't nobody what's goin' to ask where you got it! Sure, if we was to take it from poor people! But now suppose really — suppose we went over to the Kruegers and put the two loads o' wood on a sleigh an' took 'em into our shed — them people ain't no poorer on that account!

JULIUS

Wood? What you startin' after again now with wood?

MRS. WOLFF

Now that shows how you don't take notice o' nothin'! They c'n work your daughter till she

drops; they c'n try an' make her drag in wood at ten o'clock in the evenin'. That's why she run away. An' you take that kind o' thing an' say thank you. Maybe you'd give the child a hidin' and send her back to the people.

JULIUS

Sure! — That's what! — What d'you think . . .

MRS. WOLFF

Things like that hadn't ought to go unpunished. If anybody hits me, I'll hit him back. That's what I says.

JULIUS

Well, did they go an' hit the girl?

MRS. WOLFF

Why should she be runnin' away, Julius? But no, there ain't no use tryin' to do anything with you. Now the wood is lyin' out there in the alley. An' if I was to say: all right, you abuse my children, I'll take your wood — a nice face you'd make.

JULIUS

I wouldn't do no such thing . . . I don't give a —! I c'n do more'n eat, too. I'd like to see! I wouldn't stand for nothin' like that. Beatin'!

MRS. WOLFF

Well, then, don't talk so much. Go an' get your cord. Show them people that you got some cuteness! The whole thing will be over in an hour.

Then we c'n go to bed an' it's all right. An' you don't have to go out in the woods to-morrow. We'll have more fuel than we need.

JULIUS

Well, if it leaks out, it'll be all the same to me.

MRS. WOLFF

There ain't no reason why it should. But don't wake the girls.

MITTELDORF

[*From without.*] Mrs. Wolff! Mrs. Wolff! Are you still up?

MRS. WOLFF

Sure, Mitteldorf! Come right in!

[*She opens the door.*

MITTELDORF

[*Enters. He has an overcoat over his shabby uniform. His face has a Mephistophelian cast. His nose betrays an alcoholic colouring. His demeanour is gentle, almost timid. His speech is slow and dragging and unaccompanied by any change in expression.*] Good evenin', Mrs. Wolff.

MRS. WOLFF

I guess you mean to say: Good night!

MITTELDORF

I was around here once before a while ago. First I thought I saw a light, an' then, all of a

sudden, it was dark again. Nobody didn't answer me neither. But this time there was a light an' no mistake, an' so I came back once more.

MRS. WOLFF

Well, what have you got for me now, Mitteldorf?

MITTELDORF

[*Has taken a seat, thinks a while and then says:*] That's what I came here for. I got a message for you from the justice's wife.

MRS. WOLFF

She ain't wantin' me to do washin'?

MITTELDORF

[*Raises his eye-brows thoughtfully.*] That she does.

MRS. WOLFF

An' when?

MITTELDORF

To-morrow.— To-morrow mornin'.

MRS. WOLFF

An' you come in tellin' me that twelve o'clock at night?

MITTELDORF

But to-morrow is the missis' wash day.

Mrs. Wolff

But a person ought to know that a few days ahead o' time.

Mitteldorf

That' a fac'. But don't go makin' a noise. I just plumb forgot all about it again. I got so many things to think of with my poor head, that sometimes I just naturally forgets things.

Mrs. Wolff

Well, Mitteldorf, I'll try an' arrange it. We always was good friends. You got enough on your shoulders, I suppose, with them twelve children o' yours at home, eh? You ain't got no call to make yourself out worse'n you are.

Mitteldorf

If you don't come in the mornin', I'll have a pretty tough time of it!

Mrs. Wolff

I'll come. You needn't go worryin'. There, take a drink. I guess you need it this weather. [*She gives him a glass of toddy.*] I just happened to have a bit o' hot water. You know, we gotta take a trip yet to-night — for fat geese over to Treptow. You don't get no time in the day. That can't be helped in this kind of a life. Poor people is got to work themselves sick day an' night, an' rich people lies in bed snorin'.

MITTELDORF

I been given notice. Did you know that? The justice has given me notice. I ain't keen enough after the people.

MRS. WOLFF

They wants you to be like an old watch dog, I suppose.

MITTELDORF

I'd rather not go home at all. When I gets there, it'll be nothin' but quarrelin'. She just drives me crazy with her reproaches.

MRS. WOLFF

Put your fingers in your ears!

MITTELDORF

An' then a man goes to the tavern a bit, so that the worries don't down him altogether; an' now he ain't to do that no moré neither! He ain't to do nothin'. An' now I just come from a bit of a time there. A feller treated to a little keg.

MRS. WOLFF

You ain't goin' to be scared of a woman? If she scolds, scold harder; an' if she beats you, beat her back. Come here now — you're taller'n me — get me down them things off the shelf. An' Julius, you get the sleigh ready! [JULIUS *exit.*] How often have I got to tell you? [MITTELDORF *has taken cords and pulley lines from the high*

shelf on the wall.] Get ready the big sleigh! You c'n hand them cords right down to him.

JULIUS

[*From without.*] I can't see!

MRS. WOLFF

What can't you do?

JULIUS

[*Appears in the doorway.*] I can't get that sleigh out alone! Everythin' is all mixed up in a heap here. An' there ain't nothin' to be done without a light.

MRS. WOLFF

Now you're helpless again — like always. [*Rapidly she puts shawls about her head and chest.*] You must wait, I'll come an' lend a hand. There's the lantern, Mitteldorf. [MITTELDORF *slowly takes a lantern and hands it to* MRS. WOLFF.] There! thank you. [*She puts the burning candle into the lantern.*] We'll put that in here an' then we c'n go. Now I'll help you drag out the sleigh. [*She goes ahead with the lantern.* MITTELDORF *follows her. In the door she turns around and hands the lantern to* MITTELDORF.] You c'n come an' hold the light for us a bit!

MITTELDORF

[*Holding the light and humming to himself:*]
"Morningre-ed, morningre-ed . . ."

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE SECOND ACT

Court room of Justice Von Weihrhahn. *A great, bare, white-washed room with three windows in the rear wall. The main door is in the left wall. Along the wall to the right stands the long official table covered with books, legal documents, etc.; behind it the chair of the justice. Near the centre window are the clerk's chair and table. To the right is a bookcase of white wood, so arranged that it is within reach of the justice when he sits in his chair. The left wall is hidden by cases containing documents. In the foreground, beginning at the wall to the left, six chairs stand in a row. Their occupants would be seen by the spectator from behind. — It is a bright forenoon in Winter. The clerk* Glasenapp *sits scribbling at his table. He is a poverty-stricken, spectacled person. Justice* Von Weihrhahn, *carrying a roll of documents under his arm, enters rapidly.* Weihrhahn *is about forty years old and wears a monocle. He makes the impression of a son of the landed nobility of Prussia. His official garb consists of a buttoned, black walking coat, and very tall boots put on over his trousers. He speaks in what is almost a falsetto voice and carefully cultivates a military brevity of expression.*

WEHRHAHN

[*By the way, like one crushed by the weight of affairs.*] Mornin'.

GLASENAPP

Servant, sir.

WEHRHAHN

Anything happened, Glasenapp?

GLASENAPP

[*Standing and looking through some papers.*] I've got to report, your honour — there was first, oh, yes,— the innkeeper Fiebig. He begs for permission, your honour, to have music and dancing at his inn next Sunday.

WEHRHAHN

Isn't that . . . perhaps you can tell me. Fiebig? There was some one who recently rented his hall . . .?

GLASENAPP

To the liberals. Quite right, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

This same Fiebig?

GLASENAPP

Yes, my lord.

WEHRHAHN

We'll have to put a check-rein on him for a while.

The constable Mitteldorf *enters.*

Mitteldorf

Servant, my lord.

Wehrhahn

Listen here: once and for all — officially I am simply the justice.

Mitteldorf

Yes, sir. As you wish, my — your honour, I meant to say.

Wehrhahn

I wish you would try to understand this fact: my being a baron is purely by the way. Is not, at all events, to be considered here. [*To* Glasenapp.] Now I'd like to hear further, please. Wasn't the author Motes here?

Glasenapp

Yes, your honour.

Wehrhahn

Aha! So he *was* here! I confess that I am very curious. I hope that it was his intention to come back?

Glasenapp

He intended to be back here about half past eleven.

Wehrhahn

Did he by any chance tell you anything?

GLASENAPP

He came in the matter of Dr. Fleischer.

WEHRHAHN

Well, now, you may as well tell me — are you acquainted with this Dr. Fleischer?

GLASENAPP

All I know is that he lives in the Villa Krueger.

WEHRHAHN

And how long has he been living in this place?

GLASENAPP

Well, I've been here since Michaelmas.

WEHRHAHN

To be sure, you came here at the same time with me, about four months ago.

GLASENAPP

[*Looking toward* MITTELDORF *for information.*] From what I hear the man has been living here about two years.

WEHRHAHN

[*To* MITTELDORF.] I don't suppose you can give us any information?

MITTELDORF

Beggin' your pardon, he came Michaelmas a year ago.

WEHRHAHN

At that time he moved here?

MITTELDORF

Exactly, your honour — from Berlin.

WEHRHAHN

Have you any more intimate information about this individual?

MITTELDORF

All I know is his brother is cashier of a theatre.

WEHRHAHN

I didn't ask for information concerning his brother! What is his occupation? — What does he himself do? What is he?

MITTELDORF

I don't know as I can say anythin' particular. People do say that he's sick. I suppose he suffers from diabetes.

WEHRHAHN

I'm quite indifferent as to the character of his malady. He can sweat syrup if it amuses him. *What* is he?

GLASENAPP

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] He calls himself a free spear in scholarship.

WEHRHAHN

Lance! Lance! Not spear! A free lance.

GLASENAPP

The bookbinder Hugk always does work for him; he has some books bound every week.

WEHRHAHN

I wouldn't mind seeing what an individual of that kind reads.

GLASENAPP

The postman thinks he must take in about twenty newspapers.- Democratic ones, too.

WEHRHAHN

You may summon Hugk to this court some time.

GLASENAPP

Right away?

WEHRHAHN

No, at a more convenient time. To-morrow or the next day. Let him bring a few of the books in question with him. [*To* MITTELDORF.] You seem to take naps all day. Or perhaps the man has good cigars and knows how to invest them!

MITTELDORF

Your honour . . .!

WEHRHAHN

Never mind! Never mind! I will inspect the necessary persons myself. My honourable predecessor has permitted a state of affairs to obtain that . . .! We will change all that by degrees.— It is simply disgraceful for a police official to permit himself to be deceived by any one. That is, of course, entirely beyond your comprehension. [*To* GLASENAPP.] Didn't Motes say anything definite?

GLASENAPP

I can't say that he did — nothing definite. He was of the opinion that your honour was informed . . .

WEHRHAHN

In a very general way, I am. I have had my eye on the man in question for some time — on this Dr. Fleischer I mean. Mr. Motes simply confirmed me in my own entirely correct judgment of his peculiar character.— What kind of a reputation has Motes himself? [GLASENAPP *and* MITTELDORF *exchange glances and* GLASENAPP *shrugs his shoulders.*] Lives largely on credit, eh?

GLASENAPP

He says he has a pension.

WEHRHAHN

Pension?

GLASENAPP

Well, you know he got shot in the eye.

WEHRHAHN

So his pension is really paid as damages.

GLASENAPP

Beggin' your honour's pardon, but if it's a question of damages the man inflicts more than he's ever received. Nobody's ever seen him have a penny for anything.

WEHRHAHN

[*Amused.*] Is there anything else of importance?

GLASENAPP

Nothing but minor matters, your honour — somebody giving notice —

WEHRHAHN

That'll do; that'll do. Do you happen ever to have heard any reports to the effect that this Dr. Fleischer does not guard his tongue with particular care?

GLASENAPP

Not that I know of at this moment.

WEHRHAHN

Because that is the information that has come to me. He is said to have made illegal remarks concerning a number of exalted personages. However, all that will appear in good time. We can set to work now. Mitteldorf, have you anything to report?

MITTELDORF

They tell me that a theft has been committed during the night.

WEHRHAHN

A theft? Where?

MITTELDORF

In the Villa Krueger.

WEHRHAHN

What has been stolen?

MITTELDORF

Some firewood.

WEHRHAHN

Last night, or when?

MITTELDORF

Just last night.

WEHRHAHN

From whom does your information come?

MITTELDORF

My information? It come from . . . from . . .

WEHRHAHN

Well, from whom? Out with it!

MITTELDORF

I heard it from — I got it from Dr. Fleischer.

WEHRHAHN

Aha! You're in the habit then of conversing with him?

MITTELDORF

Mr. Krueger told me about it himself too.

WEHRHAHN

The man is a nuisance with his perpetual complaints. He writes me about three letters a week. Either he has been cheated, or some one has broken his fence, or else some one has trespassed on his property. Nothing but one annoyance after another.

MOTES

[*Enters. He laughs almost continually in a nervous way.*] Beg to bid you a good morning, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

Ah, there you are. Very glad you came in. You can help me out with some information at once. A theft is said to have been committed at the Villa Krueger.

MOTES

I don't live there any longer.

WEHRHAHN

And nothing has come to your ears either?

MOTES

Oh, I heard something about it, but nothing definite. As I was just passsing by the Villa I saw them both looking for traces in the snow.

WEHRHAHN

Is that so? Dr. Fleischer is assisting him. I take it for granted then that they're pretty thick together?

MOTES

Inseparable in every sense, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

Aha! As far as Fleischer is concerned — he interests me most of all. Take a seat, please. I confess that I didn't sleep more than half the night. This matter simply wouldn't let me sleep. The letter that you wrote me excited me to an extraordinary degree.— That is a matter of temperament, to be sure. The slumbers of my predecessor would scarcely have been disturbed.— As far as I am concerned I have made up my mind, so to speak, to go the whole way.— It is my function here to make careful tests and to exterminate undesirable elements.— Under the protection of my honourable predecessor the sphere of our activity has become a receptacle for refuse of various kinds: lives that cannot bear the light — outlawed individuals, enemies of royalty and of the realm. These people must be made to suffer.— As for yourself, Mr. Motes, you are an author?

MOTES

I write on subjects connected with forestry and game.

WEHRHAHN

In the appropriate technical journals, I take it. *A propos:* do you manage to make a living that way?

MOTES

If one is well known, it can be done. I may gratefully say that I earn an excellent competency.

WEHRHAHN

So you are a forester by profession?

MOTES

I studied at the academy, your honour, and pursued my studies in Eberswalde. Shortly before the final examinations I met with this misfortune . . .

WEHRHAHN

Ah, yes; I see you wear a bandage.

MOTES

I lost an eye while hunting. Some bird shot flew into my right eye. The responsibility for the accident could not, unfortunately, be placed. And so I had to give up my career.

WEHRHAHN

Then you do not receive a pension?

MOTES

No. But I have fought my way through pretty well now. My name is getting to be known in a good many quarters.

WEHRHAHN

H-m.— Are you by any chance acquainted with my brother-in-law?

MOTES

Yes, indeed — Chief Forester von Wachsmann. I correspond a good deal with him and furthermore we are fellow members of the society for the breeding of pointers.

WEHRHAHN

[*Somewhat relieved.*] Ah, so you are really acquainted with him? I'm very glad indeed to hear that. That makes the whole matter easier of adjustment and lays a foundation for mutual confidence. It serves to remove any possible obstacle. — You wrote me in your letter, you recall, that you had had the opportunity of observing this Dr. Fleischer. Now tell me, please, what you know.

MOTES

[*Coughs.*] When I — about a year ago — took up my residence in the Villa Krueger, I had naturally no suspicion of the character of the people with whom I was to dwell under one roof.

WEHRHAHN

You were acquainted with neither Krueger nor Fleischer?

MOTES

No; but you know how things go. Living in one house with them I couldn't keep to myself entirely.

WEHRHAHN

And what kind of people visited the house?

MOTES

[*With a significant gesture.*] Ah!

WEHRHAHN

I understand.

MOTES

Tom, Dick and Harry — democrats, of course.

WEHRHAHN

Were regular meetings held?

MOTES

Every Thursday, so far as I could learn.

WEHRHAHN

That will certainly bear watching.— And you no longer associate with those people?

MOTES

A point was reached where intercourse with them became impossible, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

You were repelled, eh?

MOTES

The whole business became utterly repulsive to me.

WEHRHAHN

The unlawful atmosphere that obtained there, the impudent jeering at exalted personages — all that, I take it, you could no longer endure?

MOTES

I stayed simply because I thought it might serve some good purpose.

WEHRHAHN

But finally you gave notice after all?

MOTES

I moved out, yes, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

And finally you made up your mind to —

MOTES

I considered it my duty —

WEHRHAHN

To lodge notice with the authorities.— I consider that very worthy in you.— So he used a certain kind of expression — we will make a record of all that later, of course — a certain kind of expression in reference to a personage whose exalted station demands our reverence.

MOTES

He certainly did that, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

You would be willing, if necessary, to confirm that by oath.

MOTES

I would be willing to confirm it.

WEHRHAHN

In fact, you will be obliged to make such confirmation.

MOTES

Yes, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

Of course it would be best if we could procure an additional witness.

MOTES

I would have to look about. The trouble is, though, that the man is very prodigal of his money.

WEHRHAHN

Ah, just wait a minute. Krueger is coming in now. I will first attend to his business. At all events I am very grateful to you for your active assistance. One is absolutely dependent on such assistance if one desires to accomplish anything nowadays.

KRUEGER

[*Enters hastily and excitedly.*] O Lord, O Lord! Good day, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

[*To* MOTES.] Pardon me just a moment. [*In an arrogant and inquisitorial tone to* KRUEGER.] What is it you want?

KRUEGER *is a small man, somewhat hard of hearing and nearly seventy years old. He is slightly bowed with age; his left shoulder hangs somewhat. Otherwise he is still very vigorous and emphasises his remarks by violent gesticulations. He wears a fur cap which he is now holding in his hand, a brown winter overcoat and a thick woolen shawl around his neck.*

KRUEGER

[*Literally charged with rage, explodes:*] I've been robbed, your honour.

[*Getting his breath, he wipes the perspiration from his forehead with a handkerchief and, after the manner of people with impaired hearing, stares straight at the mouth of the justice.*

WEHRHAHN

Robbed, eh?

KRUEGER

[*Already exasperated.*] Robbed is what I said. I have been robbed. Two whole loads of wood have been stolen from me.

WEHRHAHN

[*Looking around at those present, half-smiling, says lightly:*] Not the least thing of that kind has happened here recently.

KRUEGER

[*Putting his hand to his ear.*] What? Not the slightest thing? Then perhaps I came into this office for fun?

WEHRHAHN

You need not become violent. What is your name, by the way?

KRUEGER

[*Taken aback.*] My name?

WEHRHAHN

Yes, your name!

KRUEGER

So my name isn't known to you? I thought we had had the pleasure before.

WEHRHAHN

Sorry. Can't say that I have a clear recollection. And that wouldn't matter officially anyhow.

KRUEGER

[*Resignedly.*] My name is Krueger.

WEHRHAHN

Capitalist by any chance?

KRUEGER

[*With extreme and ironic vehemence.*] Exactly — capitalist and houseowner here.

WEHRHAHN

Identify yourself, please.

KRUEGER

I — identify myself! My name is Krueger. I don't think we need go to any further trouble. I've been living here for thirty years. Every child in the place knows me.

WEHRHAHN

The length of your residence here doesn't concern me. It is my business merely to ascertain your identity. Is this gentleman known to you — Mr. Motes?

MOTES *half rises with an angry expression.*

WEHRHAHN

Ah, yes, I understand. Kindly sit down. Well, Glasenapp?

GLASENAPP

Yes, at your service. It is Mr. Krueger all right.

WEHRHAHN

Very well.— So you have been robbed of wood?

KRUEGER

Of wood, exactly. Two loads of pine wood.

WEHRHAHN

Did you have the wood stored in your shed?

KRUEGER

[*Groving violent again.*] That's quite a separate matter. That's the substance of another complaint I have to make.

WEHRHAHN

[*With an ironic laugh and looking at the others.*] Still another one?

KRUEGER

What do you mean?

WEHRHAHN

Nothing. You may go ahead with your statement. The wood, it appears, was not in your shed?

KRUEGER

The wood was in the garden, that is, in front of the garden.

WEHRHAHN

In other words: it lay in the street.

KRUEGER

It lay in front of the garden on my property.

WEHRHAHN

So that any one could pick it up without further ado?

KRUEGER

And that is just the fault of the servant-girl. She was to take the wood in last night.

WEHRHAHN

And it dropped out of her mind.

KRUEGER

She refused to do it. And when I insisted on her doing it, she ended by running away. I intend to bring suit against her parents. I intend to claim full damages.

WEHRHAHN

You may do about that as you please. It isn't likely to help you very greatly.— Now is there any one whom you suspect of the theft?

KRUEGER

No. They're all a set of thieves around here.

WEHRHAHN

You will please to avoid such general imputations. You must surely be able to offer me a clue of some kind.

KRUEGER

Well, you can't expect me to accuse any one at random.

WEHRHAHN

Who lives in your house beside yourself?

KRUEGER

Dr. Fleischer.

WEHRHAHN

[*As if trying to recall something.*] Dr. Fleischer? Dr. Fleischer? Why, he is a — What is he, anyhow?

KRUEGER

He is a thoroughly learned man, that's what he is — thoroughly learned.

WEHRHAHN

And I suppose that you and he are very intimate with each other.

KRUEGER

That is my business, with whom I happen to be intimate. That has no bearing on the matter in hand, it seems to me.

WEHRHAHN

How is one to discover anything under such circumstances? You must give me a hint, at least!

KRUEGER

Must I? Goodness, gracious me! Must I? Two loads of wood have been stolen from me! I simply come to give information concerning the theft . . .

WEHRHAHN

But you must have a theory of some kind. The wood must necessarily have been stolen by somebody.

KRUEGER

Wha . . . Yes . . . well, I didn't do it! I of all people didn't do it!

WEHRHAHN

But my dear man . . .

KRUEGER

Wha . . .? My name is Krueger.

WEHRHAHN

[*Interrupting and apparently bored.*] M-yes.— Well, Glasenapp, just make a record of the facts.— And now, Mr. Krueger, what's this business about your maid? The girl, you say, ran away?

KRUEGER

Yes, that's exactly what she did — ran off to her parents.

WEHRHAHN

Do her parents live in this place?

KRUEGER

[*Not having heard correctly.*] I'm not concerned with her face.

WEHRHAHN

I asked whether the parents of the girl live here?

GLASENAPP

She's the daughter of the washerwoman Wolff.

WEHRHAHN

Wolff — the same one who's washing for us today, Glasenapp?

GLASENAPP

The same, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

[*Shaking his head.*] Very strange indeed! — She's a very honest and a very industrious woman. — [*To* KRUEGER.] Is that a fact? Is she the daughter of the woman in question?

KRUEGER

She is the daughter of the washerwoman Wolff.

WEHRHAHN

And has the girl come back?

KRUEGER

Up to the present time the girl has not come back.

WEHRHAHN

Then suppose we call in Mrs. Wolff herself. Mitteldorf! You act as though you were very tired. Well, go across the yard. Mrs. Wolff is to come to me at once. I beg you to be seated, Mr. Krueger.

KRUEGER

[*Sitting down and sighing.*] O Lord! O Lord! What a life!

WEHRHAHN

[*Softly to* GLASENAPP *and* MOTES.] I'm rather curious to see what will develop. There's something more than meets the eye in all this. I think a great deal of Mrs. Wolff. The woman works enough for four men. My wife assures me that if Wolff doesn't come she has to hire two women in her place.— Her opinions aren't half bad either.

MOTES

She wants her daughters to go on the operatic stage . . .

WEHRHAHN

Oh, of course, she may have a screw loose in that respect. But that's no fault of character. What have you hanging there, Mr. Motes?

MOTES

They're some wire snares. I'm taking them to the forester Seidel.

WEHRHAHN

Do let me see one of those things. [*He takes one and looks at it closely.*] And in these things the poor beasts are slowly throttled to death.

MRS. WOLFF *enters, followed by* MITTELDORF. *She is drying her hands, which are still moist from the wash tub.*

MRS. WOLFF

[*Unembarrassed, cheerfully, with a swift glance at the snares.*] Here I am. What's up now? What'm I bein' wanted for?

WEHRHAHN

Mrs. Wolff, is this gentleman known to you?

MRS. WOLFF

Which one of 'em? [*Pointing with her finger at* KRUEGER.] This here, this is Mr. Krueger. I guess I know him all right. Good mornin', Mr. Krueger.

WEHRHAHN

Your daughter is in Mr. Krueger's service?

MRS. WOLFF

Who? My daughter? That's so — Leontine. [*To* KRUEGER.] But then, she run away from you, didn't she?

KRUEGER

[*Enraged.*] She did indeed.

WEHRHAHN

[*Interrupting.*] Now wait a moment.

MRS. WOLFF

What kind o' trouble did you have together?

WEHRHAHN

Mrs. Wolff, you listen to me. Your daughter must return to Mr. Krueger at once.

MRS. WOLFF

Oh, no, we'd rather keep her at home now.

WEHRHAHN

That can't be done quite so easily as you think. Mr. Krueger has the right, if he wishes to exert it, of calling in the help of the police. In that case we would have to take your daughter back by force.

MRS. WOLFF

But my husband just happened to take it into his head. He's just made up his mind not to let the girl go no more. An' when my husband takes a notion like that into his head . . . The trouble is: all you men has such awful tempers!

WEHRHAHN

Suppose you let that go, for the moment, Mrs. Wolff. How long has your daughter been at home?

Mrs. Wolff

She came back last night.

Wehrhahn

Last night? Very well. She had been told to carry wood into the shed and she refused.

Mrs. Wolff

Eh, is that so? Refused? That girl o' mine don't refuse to do work. An' I wouldn't advise her to do that kind o' thing neither.

Wehrhahn

You hear what Mrs. Wolff says.

Mrs. Wolff

That girl has always been a willin' girl. If she'd ever refused to lend a hand . . .

Krueger

She simply refused to carry in the wood!

Mrs. Wolff

Yes, drag in wood! At half past ten at night! People who asks such a thing of a child like that —

Wehrhahn

The essential thing, however, Mrs. Wolff, is this: the wood was left out over night and has been stolen. And so . . .

KRUEGER

[*Losing self-control.*] You will replace that wood, Mrs. Wolff.

WEHRHAHN

All that remains to be seen, if you will wait.

KRUEGER

You will indemnify me for that wood to the last farthing!

MRS. WOLFF

An' is that so? That'd be a new way o' doin' things! Did I, maybe, go an' steal your wood?

WEHRHAHN

You had better let the man calm down, Mrs. Wolff.

MRS. WOLFF

No, when Mr. Krueger comes round me with things like that, payin' for wood and such like, he ain't goin' to have no luck. I always been friendly with them people — that's sure. Nobody can't complain o' nothin' 'sfar 's I'm concerned. But if things gets to this point, then I'd rather up and says my say just exactly how I feel, you know. I do my dooty and that's enough. There ain't nobody in the whole village what c'n say anythin' against me. But I ain't goin' to let *nobody* walk all over me!

WEHRHAHN

You need not wear yourself out, Mrs. Wolff. You have absolutely no cause for it. Just remain calm, quite calm. You're not entirely unknown to me, after all. There isn't a human being who would undertake to deny your industry and honesty. So let us hear what you have to say in answer to the plaintiff.

KRUEGER

The woman can't possibly have anything to say!

MRS. WOLFF

Hol' on, now, everybody! How's that, I'd like to know? Ain't the girl my daughter? An' I'm not to have anythin' to say! You gotta go an' look for some kind of a fool! You don't know much about me. I don't has to hide what I thinks from no one — no, not from his honour hisself, an' a good deal less from you, you may take your oath on that!

WEHRHAHN

I quite understand your excitement, Mrs. Wolff. But if you desire to serve the cause at issue, I would advise you to remain calm.

MRS. WOLFF

That's what a person gets. I been washin' clothes for them people these ten years. All that time we ain't had a fallin' out. An' now, all of a sudden, they treat you this way. I ain't comin' to your house no more, you c'n believe me.

KRUEGER

You don't need to. There are other washerwomen.

MRS. WOLFF

An' the vegetables an' the fruit out o' your garden — you c'n just go an' get somebody else to sell 'em for you.

KRUEGER

I can get rid of all that. There's no fear. All you needed to have done was to have taken a stick to that girl of yours and sent her back.

MRS. WOLFF

I won't have no daughter of mine abused.

KRUEGER

Who has been abusing your daughter, I'd like to know!

MRS. WOLFF

[*To* WEHRHAHN.] The girl came back to me no better'n a skeleton.

KRUEGER

Then let her not spend all her nights dancing.

MRS. WOLFF

She sleeps like the dead all day.

WEHRHAHN

[*Past* MRS. WOLFF *to* KRUEGER.] By the way, where did you buy the wood in question?

Mrs. Wolff

Is this thing goin' to last much longer?

Wehrhahn

Why, Mrs. Wolff?

Mrs. Wolff

Why, on account o' the washin'. If I wastes my time standin' round here, I can't get done.

Wehrhahn

We can't take that into consideration here, Mrs. Wolff.

Mrs. Wolff

An' your wife? What's she goin' to say? You c'n go an' settle it with her, your honour.

Wehrhahn

It will only last another minute, anyhow.— You tell us frankly, Mrs. Wolff — you know the whole village. Whom do you consider capable of the crime in question? Who could possibly have stolen the wood?

Mrs. Wolff

I can't tell you nothin' about that, your honour.

Wehrhahn

And nothing suspicious came to your attention?

Mrs. Wolff

I wasn't even at home last night. I had to go over to Treptow to buy geese.

Wehrhahn

At what time was that?

Mrs. Wolff

A little after ten. Mitteldorf, he was there when we started.

Wehrhahn

And no team carrying wood met you?

Mrs. Wolff

No, nothin' like that.

Wehrhahn

How about you, Mitteldorf, did you notice nothing?

Mitteldorf

[*After some thought.*] No, I didn't notice nothin' suspicious.

Wehrhahn

Of course not. I might have known that. [*To* Krueger.] Well, where did you buy the wood?

Krueger

Why do you have to know that?

WEHRHAHN

You will kindly leave that to me.

KRUEGER

I naturally bought the wood from the department of forestry.

WEHRHAHN

Why naturally? I don't see that at all. There are, for instance, private wood yards. Personally I buy my wood from Sandberg. Why shouldn't you buy yours from a dealer? One really almost gets a better bargain.

KRUEGER

[*Impatiently.*] I haven't any more time, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

What do you mean by that? Time? You have no time? Have you come to me, or do I come to you? Am I taking up your time or are you taking up mine?

KRUEGER

That's your business. That's what you're here for.

WEHRHAHN

Perhaps I'm your bootblack, eh?

KRUEGER

Perhaps I've stolen silver spoons! I forbid you to use that tone to me. You're not a corporal and I'm not a recruit.

WEHRHAHN

Well, that passes . . . Don't shout so!

KRUEGER

It is you who do all the shouting.

WEHRHAHN

You are half deaf. It is necessary for me to shout.

KRUEGER

You shout all the time. You shout at every one who comes in here.

WEHRHAHN

I don't shout at any one. Be silent.

KRUEGER

You carry on as if you were heaven knows what! You annoy the whole place with your chicanery!

WEHRHAHN

I'm only making a beginning. I'll make you a good deal more uncomfortable before I get through.

KRUEGER

That doesn't make the slightest impression on me. You're a pretentious nobody — nothing else. You simply want to cut a big figure. As though you were the king himself, you . . .

WEHRHAHN

I *am* king in this place.

KRUEGER

[*Laughs heartily.*] You'd better let that be. In my estimation you're nothing at all. You're nothing but an ordinary justice of the peace. In fact, you've got to learn to be one first.

WEHRHAHN

Sir, if you don't hold your tongue this minute . . .

KRUEGER

Then, I suppose, you'll have me arrested. I wouldn't advise you to go to such lengths after all. You might put yourself into a dangerous position.

WEHRHAHN

Dangerous? [*To* MOTES.] Did you hear that? [*To* KRUEGER.] And however much you intrigue, you and your admirable followers, and however you try to undermine my position — you won't force me to abandon my station.

KRUEGER

Good heavens! *I* try to undermine your position? Your whole personality is far too unimpor-

tant. But you may take my word for this, that if you don't change your tactics completely, you will cause so much trouble that you will make yourself quite impossible.

WEHRHAHN

[*To* MOTES.] I suppose, Mr. Motes, that one must consider his age.

KRUEGER

I beg to have my complaint recorded.

WEHRHAHN

[*Turning over the papers on his table.*] You will please to send in your complaint in writing. I have no time at this moment.

KRUEGER *looks at him in consternation, turns around vigorously, and leaves the office without a word.*

WEHRHAHN

[*After a pause of embarrassment.*] That's the way people annoy me with trifles.— Ugh! — [*To* MRS. WOLFF.] You'd better get back to your washing.— I tell you, my dear Motes, a position like mine is made hard enough. If one were not conscious of what one represents here — one might sometimes be tempted to throw up the whole business. But as it is, one's motto must be to stand one's ground bravely. For, after all, what is it that we are defending? The most sacred goods of the nation! —

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE THIRD ACT

It is about eight o'clock in the morning. The scene is the dwelling of Mrs. Wolff. *Water for coffee is boiling on the oven.* Mrs. Wolff *is sitting on a footstool and counting out money on the seat of a chair.* Julius *enters, carrying a slaughtered rabbit.*

Julius

You better go an' hide that there money!

Mrs. Wolff

[*Absorbed in her calculations, gruffly:*] Don't bother me! [*Silence.*

Julius *throws the rabbit on a stool. He wanders about irresolutely, picking up one object after another. Finally he sets about blacking a boot. From afar the blowing of a huntsman's horn is heard.*

Julius

[*Listens. Anxious and excited.*] I axed you to go an' hide that there money!

Mrs. Wolff

An' I'm tellin' you not to bother me, Julius. Just let that fool Motes tootle all he wants. He's out in the woods an' ain't thinkin' o' nothin'.

JULIUS

You go right ahead and land us in gaol!

MRS. WOLFF

Don't talk that fool talk. The girl's comin'.

ADELAIDE

[*Comes in, just out of bed.*] Good mornin', mama.

MRS. WOLFF

Did you sleep well?

ADELAIDE

You was out in the night, wasn't you?

MRS. WOLFF

I guess you musta been dreamin'. Hurry now! Bring in some wood, an' be quick about it!

ADELAIDE, *playing ball with an orange, goes toward the door.*

MRS. WOLFF

Where did you get *that?*

ADELAIDE

Schoebel gave it to me out o' his shop. [*Exit.*

MRS. WOLFF

I don't want you to take no presents from that feller.— Come here, Julius! Listen to me!

Here I got ninety-nine crowns! That's always the same old way with Wulkow. He just cheated us out o' one, because he promised to give a hundred.— I'm puttin' the money in this bag, y'understand? Now go an' get a hoe and dig a hole in the goatshed — but right under the manger where it's dry. An' then you c'n put the bag into the hole. D'you hear me? An' take a flat stone an' put it across. But don't be so long doin' it.

JULIUS

I thought you was goin' to pay an instalment to Fischer!

MRS. WOLFF

Can't you never do what I tell you to? Don't poke round so long, y'understand?

JULIUS

Don't you go an' rile me or I'll give you somethin' to make you stop. I don't hold with that money stayin' in this here house.

MRS. WOLFF

Well, what's goin' to be done with it?

JULIUS

You take it an' you carry it over to Fischer. You said we was goin' to use it to make a payment to him.

MRS. WOLFF

You're stoopid enough to make a person sick. If it wasn't for me you'd just go to the dogs.

Julius

Go on with your screamin'! That's right.

Mrs. Wolff

A person can't help screamin', you're such a fool. If you had some sense, I wouldn't have to scream. If we go an' takes that money to Fischer now, you look out an' see what happens!

Julius

That's what I say. Look at the whole dam' business. What's the good of it to me if I gotta go to gaol!

Mrs. Wolff

Now it's about time you was keepin' still.

Julius

You can't scream no louder, can you?

Mrs. Wolff

I ain't goin' to get me a new tongue on your account. You raise a row . . . just as hard as you can, all on account o' this bit o' business. You just look out for yourself an' not for me. Did you throw the key in the river?

Julius

Has I had a chanst to get down there yet?

Mrs. Wolff

Then it's about time you was gettin' there! D'you want 'em to find the key on you? [Julius

is about to go.] Oh, wait a minute, Julius. Let me have the key!

JULIUS

What you goin' to do with it?

MRS. WOLFF

[*Hiding the key about her person.*] That ain't no business o' yours; that's mine. [*She pours coffee beans into the hand-mill and begins to grind.*] Now you go out to the shed; then you c'n come back an' drink your coffee.

JULIUS

If I'd ha' known all that before. Aw!

[JULIUS *exit.* ADELAIDE *enters, carrying a large apron full of firewood.*

MRS. WOLFF

Where d'you go an' get that wood?

ADELAIDE

Why, from the new blocks o' pine.

MRS. WOLFF

You wasn't to use that new wood yet.

ADELAIDE

[*Dropping the wood on the floor in front of the oven.*] That don't do no harm, mama, if it's burned up!

Mrs. Wolff

You think you know a lot! What are you foolin' about? You grow up a bit an' then talk!

Adelaide

I know where it comes from!

Mrs. Wolff

What do you mean, girl?

Adelaide

I mean the wood.

Mrs. Wolff

Don't go jabberin' now; we bought that at a auction.

Adelaide

[*Playing ball with her orange.*] Oh, Lord, if that was true! But you just went and took it!

Mrs. Wolff

What's that you say?

Adelaide

It's just taken. That's the wood from Krueger's, mama. Leontine told me.

Mrs. Wolff

[*Cuffs her head.*] There you got an answer. We ain't no thieves. Now go an' get your lessons.

An' do 'em nice! I'll come an' look 'em over later!

ADELAIDE

[*Exit. From the adjoining room.*] I thought I could go skatin'.

MRS. WOLFF

An' your lessons for your confirmation? I guess you forgot them!

ADELAIDE

That don't come till Tuesday.

MRS. WOLFF

It's to-morrow! You go an' study your verses. I'll come in an' hear you say 'em later.

ADELAIDE'S

[*Loud yawning is heard from the adjoining room. Then she says:*]

"Jesus to his disciples said,
Use your fingers to eat your bread."

JULIUS *comes back.*

MRS. WOLFF

Well, Julius, did you go an' do what I told you?

JULIUS

If you don't like my way o' doin', go an' do things yourself.

Mrs. Wolff

God knows that *is* the best way — always. [*She pours out two cupfuls of coffee, one for him and one for herself, and places the two cups with bread and butter on a wooden chair.*] Here, drink your coffee.

Julius

[*Sitting down and cutting himself some bread.*] I hope Wulkow's been able to get away!

Mrs. Wolff

In this thaw!

Julius

Even if it is thawin', you can't tell.

Mrs. Wolff

An' you needn't care if it do freeze a bit; he ain't goin' to be stuck. I guess he's a good way up the canal by this time.

Julius

Well, I hope he ain't lyin' under the bridge this minute.

Mrs. Wolff

For my part he can be lyin' where he wants to.

Julius

You c'n take it from me, y'understan'? That there man Wulkow is goin' to get into a hell of a hole some day.

Mrs. Wolff

That's his business; that ain't none o' ours.

Julius

Trouble is we'd all be in the same hole. You just let 'em go an' find that coat on him!

Mrs. Wolff

What coat are you talkin' about?

Julius

Krueger's, o' course!

Mrs. Wolff

Don't you go talkin' rot like that, y'understan'? An' don't go an' give yourself a black eye on account o' other people's affairs!

Julius

I guess them things concerns me!

Mrs. Wolff

Concerns you — rot! That don't concern you at all. That's my business an' not yours. You ain't no man at all; you're nothin' but an old woman! — Here you got some change. Now hurry an' get out o' here. Go over to Fiebig and take a drink. I don't care if you have a good time all day Sunday. [*A knocking is heard.*] Come right in! Come right in, any one that wants to!

Dr. Fleischer *enters, leading his little son of five by the hand.* Fleischer *is twenty-seven years old. He wears one of the Jaeger reform suits. His hair, beard and moustache are all coal-black. His eyes are deep-set; his voice, as a rule, gentle. He displays, at every moment, a touching anxiety for the child.*

Mrs. Wolff

[*Jubilantly.*] Lord! Is little Philip comin' to see us once more! Now, ain't that fine? Now I really feel proud o' that! [*She gets hold of the child and takes off his overcoat.*] Come now an' take off your coat. It's warm back here an' you ain't goin' to be cold.

Fleischer

Mrs. Wolff, there's a draught. I believe there's a draught.

Mrs. Wolff

Oh, he ain't so weak as all that. A bit o' draught ain't goin' to hurt this little feller!

Fleischer

Oh, but it will, I assure you. You have no idea. He catches cold so easily! Exercise, Philip! Keep moving a little.

Philip *jerks his shoulders back with a pettish exclamation.*

FLEISCHER

Come now, Philip. You'll end by being ill. All you have to do is to walk slowly up and down.

PHILIP

[*Naughtily.*] But. I don't want to.

MRS. WOLFF

Let him do like he wants to.

FLEISCHER

Well, good morning, Mrs. Wolff.

MRS. WOLFF

Good morning, Doctor. I'm glad to see you comin' in onct more.

FLEISCHER

Good morning, Mr. Wolff.

JULIUS

Good mornin', Mr. Fleischer.

MRS. WOLFF

You're very welcome. Please sit down.

FLEISCHER

We have just a few minutes to stay.

MRS. WOLFF

Well, if we has such a fine visit paid us so early in the mornin', we're sure to have a lucky day

this day. [*Kneeling down by the child.*] Ain't it so, my boy? You'll bring us good luck, won't you?

PHILIP

[*Excitedly.*] I went to ze zological darden; I saw ze storks zere, an' zey bit each ozzer wis zeir dolden bills.

MRS. WOLFF

Well now, you don't mean to say so! You're tellin' me a little fib, ain't you? [*Hugging and kissing the child.*] Lord, child, I could just eat you up, eat you right up. Mr. Fleischer, I'm goin' to keep this boy. This is my boy. You're my boy, ain't you? An' how's your mother, eh?

PHILIP

She's well an' she sends her redards an' you'll please tome in ze morning to wash.

MRS. WOLFF

Well now, just listen to that. A little feller like that an' he can give all that message already! [*To* FLEISCHER.] Won't you sit down, just a bit?

FLEISCHER

The boy bothers me about boating. Is it possible to go?

MRS. WOLFF

Oh, sure. The Spree is open. My girl there c'n row you out a way.

FLEISCHER

The boy won't stop about it! He's just taken that into his head.

ADELAIDE

[*Showing herself in the door that leads to the next room, beckons to* PHILIP.] Come, Philip, I'll show you somethin' real fine!

PHILIP *gives a stubborn screech.*

FLEISCHER

Now, Philip, you musn't be naughty!

ADELAIDE

Just look at that fine orange!

PHILIP'S *face is wreathed in smiles. He takes a few steps in* ADELAIDE'S *direction.*

FLEISCHER

Go ahead, but don't beg!

ADELAIDE

Come on! Come on! We'll eat this orange together now.

[*She walks in the child's direction, takes him by the hand, holds up the orange temptingly, and both go, now quite at one, into the next room.*

MRS. WOLFF

[*Following the child with her eyes.*] No, that boy, I could just sit an' look at him. I don't

know, when I see a boy like that . . . [*She takes up a corner of her apron and wipes her eyes.*] . . . I feel as if I had to howl right out.

Fleischer

Did you have a boy like that once?

Mrs. Wolff

That I had. But what's the use o' all that. You can't make people come back to life. You see — things like that — that's life . . .

A pause.

Fleischer

One can't be careful enough with children.

Mrs. Wolff

You can go an' be as careful as you want to be. What is to be, will be. [*A pause.— Shaking her head.*] What trouble did you have with Mr. Motes?

Fleischer

I? None at all! What trouble should I have had with him?

Mrs. Wolff

Oh, I was just thinkin'.

Fleischer

How old is your daughter anyhow?

MRS. WOLFF

She'll be out o' school this Easter. Why? Would you like to have her? I wouldn't mind her goin' into service if it's with you.

FLEISCHER

I don't see why not. That wouldn't be half bad.

MRS. WOLFF

She's grown up to be a strong kind o' body. Even if she is a bit young, she c'n work most as well as any one, I tell you. An' I tell you another thing. She's a scamp now an' then; she don't always do right. But she ain't no fool. That girl's got genius.

FLEISCHER

That's quite possible, no doubt.

MRS. WOLFF

You just let her go an' recite a single piece for you — just once — a pome, or somethin'. An' I tell you, Doctor, you ain't goin' to be able to get through shiverin'. You c'n possibly call her in some day when you got visitors from Berlin. All kinds o' writers comes to your house, I believe. An' she ain't backward; she'll sail right in. Oh, she does say pieces *that* beautiful.— [*With a sudden change of manner.*] Now I want to give you a bit o' advice; only you musn't be offended.

FLEISCHER

I'm never offended by good advice.

Mrs. Wolff

First thing, then: Don't give away so much. Nobody ain't goin' to thank you for it. You don't get nothin' but ingratitude.

Fleischer

Why, I don't give away very much, Mrs. Wolff.

Mrs. Wolff

That's all right. I know. An' the more you talk, the more scared people gets. First thing they says: that's a demercrat. You can't be too careful talkin'.

Fleischer

In what way am I to take all that, Mrs. Wolff?

Mrs. Wolff

You c'n go an' you c'n think what you please. But you gotta be careful when it comes to talkin', or you sit in gaol before you know it.

Fleischer

[*Turns pale.*] Well, now, look here, but that's nonsense, Mrs. Wolff.

Mrs. Wolff

No, no, I tell you that's serious. An' be careful o' that feller, whatever you do!

Fleischer

Whom do you mean by that?

MRS. WOLFF

The same man we was talkin' about a while ago.

FLEISCHER

Motes, you mean?

MRS. WOLFF

I ain't namin' no names. You must ha' had some kind o' trouble with that feller.

FLEISCHER

I don't even associate with him any longer.

MRS. WOLFF

Well, you see, that's just what I've been thinkin'.

FLEISCHER

Nobody could possibly blame me for that, Mrs. Wolff.

MRS. WOLFF

An' I ain't blamin' you for it.

FLEISCHER

It would be a fine thing, wouldn't it — to associate with a swindler, a notorious swindler.

MRS. WOLFF

That man is a swindler; you're right there.

FLEISCHER

Now he moved over to Dreier's. That poor woman will have a hard time getting her rent. And whatever she has, she'll get rid of it. Why, a fellow like that — he's a regular gaol-bird.

MRS. WOLFF

Sometimes, you know, he'll say things . . .

FLEISCHER

Is that so? About me? Well, I *am* curious.

MRS. WOLFF

I believe you was heard to say somethin' bad about some high person, or somethin' like that.

FLEISCHER

H-m. You don't know anything definite, I dare say?

MRS. WOLFF

He's mighty thick with Wehrhahn, that's certain. But I tell you what. You go over to old mother Dreier. That old witch is beginnin' to smell a rat. First they was as nice as can be to her; now they're eatin' her outta house and home!

FLEISCHER

Oh, pshaw! The whole thing is nonsense.

MRS. WOLFF

You c'n go to the Dreier woman. That don't do no harm. She c'n tell you a story . . . He

wanted to get her into givin' false witness . . . That shows the kind o' man you gotta deal with.

Fleischer

Of course, I might go there. It can do no harm. But, in the end, the whole matter is indifferent to me. It would be the deuce of a world, if a fellow like that . . . You just let him come! — Here, Philip, Philip! Where are you? We've got to go.

Adelaide's Voice

Oh, we're lookin' at such pretty pictures.

Fleischer

What do you think of that other business, anyhow?

Mrs. Wolff

What business?

Fleischer

Haven't you heard anything yet?

Mrs. Wolff

[*Restlessly.*] Well, what was I sayin'? . . . [*Impatiently.*] Hurry, Julius, an' go, so's you c'n get back in time for dinner. [*To* Fleischer.] We killed a rabbit for dinner to-day. Ain't you ready yet, Julius?

Julius

Well, give me a chanst to find my cap.

Mrs. Wolff

I can't stand seein' anybody just foolin' round that way, as if it didn't make no difference about to-day or to-morrow. I like to see things move along.

Fleischer

Why, last night, at Krueger's, they . . .

Mrs. Wolff

Do me a favour, Doctor, an' don't talk to me about that there man. I'm that angry at him! That man hurt my feelin's too bad. The way we was — him an' me, for so long — an' then he goes and tries to blacken my character with all them people. [*To* Julius.] Are you goin' or not?

Julius

I'm goin' all right; don't get so huffy. Good mornin' to you, Mr. Fleischer.

Fleischer

Good morning, Mr. Wolff. [Julius *exit.*

Mrs. Wolff

Well, as I was sayin' . . .

Fleischer

That time when his wood was stolen, I suppose he quarreled with you. But he's repented of that long since.

Mrs. Wolff

That man and repent!

Fleischer

You may believe me all the same, Mrs. Wolff. And especially after this last affair. He has a very high opinion of you indeed. The best thing would be if you were to be reconciled.

Mrs. Wolff

We might ha' talked together like sensible people, but for him to go an' run straight to the police — no, no!

Fleischer

Well, the poor little old couple *is* having bad luck: only a week ago their wood, and now the fur coat . . .

Mrs. Wolff

Are you comin' to your great news now? Out with it!

Fleischer

Well, it's a clear case of burglary.

Mrs. Wolff

Some more stealin'? Don't make fun o' me!

Fleischer

Yes, and this time it's a perfectly new fur coat.

Mrs. Wolff

Well now, you know, pretty soon I'll move away from here. That's a crowd round here! Why, a person ain't sure o' their lives. Tst! Tst! Such folks! It ain't hardly to be believed!

Fleischer

You can form an idea of the noise they're making.

Mrs. Wolff

Well, you can't hardly blame the people.

Fleischer

And really, it was a very expensive garment — of mink, I believe.

Mrs. Wolff

Ain't that somethin' like beaver, Mr. Fleischer?

Fleischer

Perhaps it was beaver, for all I know. Anyhow, they were real proud of it.— I admit, I laughed to myself over the business. When something like that is discovered it always has a comic effect.

Mrs. Wolff

You're a cruel man, really, Doctor. I can't go an' laugh about things like that.

Fleischer

You mustn't think that I'm not sorry for the man, for all that.

Mrs. Wolff

Them must be pretty strange people. I don't know. There ain't no way o' understandin' that. Just to go an' rob other people o' what's theirs — no, then it's better to work till you drop.

Fleischer

You might perhaps make a point of keeping your ears open. I believe the coat is supposed to be in the village.

Mrs. Wolff

Has they got any suspicion o' anybody?

Fleischer

Oh, there was a washerwoman working at the Krueger's . . .

Mrs. Wolff

By the name o' Miller?

Fleischer

And she has a very large family . . .?

Mrs. Wolff

The woman's got a large family, that's so, but to steal that way . . . no! She might take some little thing, yes.

Fleischer

Of course Krueger put her out.

MRS. WOLFF

Aw, that's bound to come out. My goodness, the devil hisself'd have to be back o' that if it don't. I wish I was justice here. But the man is that stoopid! — well! I c'n see better'n the dark than he can by day with his glass eye.

FLEISCHER

I almost believe you could.

MRS. WOLFF

I c'n tell you, if I had to, I could steal the chair from under that man's behind.

FLEISCHER

[*Has arisen and calls, laughingly, into the adjoining room.*] Come, Philip, come! We've got to go! Good-bye, Mrs. Wolff.

MRS. WOLFF

You get dressed, Adelaide. You c'n go an' row Mr. Fleischer a ways.

ADELAIDE

[*Enters, buttoning the last buttons at her throat and leading* PHILIP *by the hand.*] I'm all ready. [*To* PHILIP.] You come right here; I'll take you on my arm.

FLEISCHER

[*Anxiously helping the boy on with his coat.*] He's got to be wrapped up well; he's so delicate, and no doubt it's windy out on the river.

ADELAIDE

I better go ahead an' get the boat ready.

MRS. WOLFF

Is your health better these days?

FLEISCHER

Much better since I'm living out here.

ADELAIDE

[*Calls back in from the door.*] Mama, Mr. Krueger.

MRS. WOLFF

Who's comin'?

ADELAIDE

Mr. Krueger.

MRS. WOLFF

It ain't possible!

FLEISCHER

He meant to come to you during the forenoon. [*Exit.*

MRS. WOLFF

[*Throws a swift glance at the heap of fire wood and vigorously sets about clearing it away.*] Come on, now, help me get this wood out o' sight.

ADELAIDE

Why, mama? Oh, on account o' Mr. Krueger.

Mrs. Wolff

Well, what for d'you suppose? Is this a proper way for a place to look, the way this one is lookin'? Is that decent an' on Sunday mornin', too? What is Mr. Krueger goin' to think of us? [Krueger *appears, exhausted by his walk.* Mrs. Wolff *calls out to him.*] Mr. Krueger, please don't look 'round. This place is in a terrible state!

Krueger

[*Impetuously.*] Good morning! Good morning! Don't worry about that at all! You go to work every week and your house can't be expected to be perfect on Sunday. You are an excellent woman, Mrs. Wolff, and a very honest one. And I think we might do very well to forget whatever has happened between us.

Mrs. Wolff

[*Is moved, and dries her eyes from time to time with a corner of her apron.*] I never had nothin' against you in the world. I always liked to work for you. But you went an' got so rough like, you know, that a person's temper couldn't hardly help gettin' away with 'em. Lord, a person is sorry for that kind o' thing soon enough.

Krueger

You just come back and wash for us. Where is your daughter Leontine?

MRS. WOLFF

She went to take some cabbage to the postmaster.

KRUEGER

You just let us have that girl again. She can have thirty crowns wages instead of twenty. We were always quite satisfied with her in other respects. Let's forgive and forget the whole affair.

[*He holds out his hand to* MRS. WOLFF, *who takes it heartily.*

MRS. WOLFF

All that hadn't no need to happen. The girl, you see, is still foolish like a child. We old people always did get along together.

KRUEGER

Well, then, the matter is settled. [*Gradually regaining his breath.*] — Well, then, my mind is at rest about that, anyhow. — But now, do tell me! This thing that's happened to me! What do you say to that?

MRS. WOLFF

Oh, well, you know — what *can* a person say about such things?

KRUEGER

And there we got that Mr. von Wehrhahn! He's very well when it comes to annoying honest citizens and thinking out all sorts of chicanery

and persecution, but — That man, what doesn't he stick his inquisitive nose into!

Mrs. Wolff

Into everything exceptin' what he ought to.

Krueger

I'm going to him now to give formal notice. I won't rest! This thing has got to be discovered.

Mrs. Wolff

You oughtn't by no means to let a thing o' that kind go.

Krueger

And if I've got to turn everything upside down — I'll get back my coat, Mrs. Wolff.

Mrs. Wolff

What this place needs is a good cleanin' out. We won't get no rest in the village till then. They'll end up by stealin' the roof from over a person's head.

Krueger

I ask you to consider, for heaven's sake — two robberies in the course of two weeks! Two loads of wood, just like the wood you have there. [*He takes up a piece that is lying on the floor.*] Such good and expensive wood, Mrs. Wolff.

Mrs. Wolff

It's enough to make a person get blue in the face with rage. The kind o' crowd we gotta live

with here! Aw, things like that! No, you know! Just leave me alone with it!

KRUEGER

[*Irately gesticulating with the piece of wood.*] And if it costs me a thousand crowns, I'll see to it that those thieves are hunted down. They won't escape the penitentiary this time.

MRS. WOLFF

An' that'd be a blessin' too, as sure's we're alive!

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE FOURTH ACT

The court room. GLASENAPP *is sitting at his table.* MRS. WOLFF *and* ADELAIDE *are waiting for the justice.* ADELAIDE *holds on her lap a small package wrapped in linen.*

MRS. WOLFF

He's takin' his time again to-day.

GLASENAPP

[*Writing.*] Patience! Patience!

MRS. WOLFF

Well, if he's goin' to be so late again to-day, he won't have no more time for us.

GLASENAPP

Goodness! You an' your trifles! We got different kinds o' things to deal with here.

MRS. WOLFF

Aw, I guess they're fine things you got to do.

GLASENAPP

That's no way to talk. That ain't proper here!

MRS. WOLFF

Aw, act a little more grand, will you? Krueger hisself sent my girl here!

GLASENAPP

The same old story about the coat, I suppose.

MRS. WOLFF

An' why not!

GLASENAPP

Now the old fellow's got somethin' for sure. Now he can go stirrin' things up — the knock-kneed old nuisance.

MRS. WOLFF

You c'n use your tongue. You better see about findin' out somethin'.

MITTELDORF

[*Appears in the doorway.*] You're to come right over, Glasenapp. His honour wants to ax you somethin'.

GLASENAPP

Has I got to interrupt myself again?

[*He throws down his pen and goes out.*

MRS. WOLFF

Good mornin', Mitteldorf.

MITTELDORF

Good mornin'.

Mrs. Wolff

What's keepin' the justice all this while?

Mitteldorf

He's writin' pages an' pages! An' them must be important things, I c'n tell you that. [*Confidentially.*] An' lemme tell you: there's somethin' in the air.— I ain't sayin' I know exactly what. But there's somethin'— I know that as sure 's . . . You just look out, that's all, and you'll live to see it. It's goin' to come down — somethin'— and when it do — look out. That's all I say. No, I don't pretend to understand them things. It's all new doin's to me. That's what they calls modern. An' I don't know nothin' about that. But somethin's got to happen. Things can't go on this way. The whole place is got to be cleaned out. I can't say 's I gets the hang of it. I'm too old. But talk about the justice what died. Why, he wan't nothin' but a dam' fool to this one. I could go an' tell you all kinds o' things, but I ain't got no time. The baron'll be missin' me. [*He goes but, having arrived at the door, he turns back.*] The lightenin' is goin' to strike, Mrs. Wolff. Take my word for that!

Mrs. Wolff

I guess a screw's come loose somewhere with him. [*Pause.*

Adelaide

What's that I gotta say? I forgot.

Mrs. Wolff

What did you say to Mr. Krueger?

Adelaide

Why, I said that I found this here package.

Mrs. Wolff

Well, you don't need to say nothin' but that here neither. Only say it right out strong an' sure. You ain't such a mouse other times.

Wulkow

[*Comes in.*] I wish you a good morning.

Mrs. Wolff

[*Stares at* Wulkow. *She is speechless for a moment. Then:*] No, Wulkow, I guess you lost *your* mind! What are you doin' here?

Wulkow

Well, my wife, she has a baby . . .

Mrs. Wolff

What's that she's got?

Wulkow

A little girl. So I gotta go to the public registry an' make the announcement.

Mrs. Wolff

I thought you'd be out on the canal by this time.

Wulkow

An' I wouldn't mind it one little bit if I was! An' so I *would* be, if it depended on me. Didn't I go an' starts out the very minute? But when I come to the locks there wasn't no gettin' farther. I waited an' waited for the Spree to open up. Two days an' nights I lay there till this thing with my wife came along. There wasn't no use howlin' then. I had to come back.

Mrs. Wolff

So your boat is down by the bridge again?

Wulkow

That's where it is. I ain't got no other place, has I?

Mrs. Wolff

Well, don't come to me, if . . .

Wulkow

I hope they ain't caught on to nothin', at least.

Mrs. Wolff

Go to the shop an' get three cents' worth o' thread.

Adelaide

I'll go for that when we get home.

Mrs. Wolff

Do's I tell you an' don't answer back.

ADELAIDE

Aw, I ain't no baby no more. [*Exit.*

MRS. WOLFF

[*Eagerly.*] An' so you lay there by the locks?

WULKOW

Two whole days, as I been tellin' you.

MRS. WOLFF

Well, you ain't much good for this kind o' thing. You're a fine feller to go an' put on that coat in bright daylight!

WULKOW

Put it on? Me?

MRS. WOLFF

Yes, you put it on, an' in bright daylight, so's the whole place c'n know straight off what a fine fur coat you got.

WULKOW

Aw, that was 'way out in the middle o' the —

MRS. WOLFF

It was a quarter of a hour from our house. My girl saw you sittin' there. She had to go an' row Dr. Fleischer out an' he went an' had his suspicion that minute.

WULKOW

I don't know nothin' about that. That ain't none o' my business.

[*Some one is heard approaching.*

MRS. WOLFF

Sh! You want to be on the lookout now, that's all.

GLASENAPP

[*Enters hurriedly with an attempt to imitate the manner of the justice. He asks* WULKOW *condescendingly:*] What business have you?

WEHRHAHN

[*Still without.*] What do you want, girl? You're looking for me? Come in, then. [WEHRHAHN *permits* ADELAIDE *to precede him and then enters.*] I have very little time to-day. Ah, yes, aren't you Mrs. Wolff's little girl? Well, then, sit down. What have you there?

ADELAIDE

I got a package . . .

WEHRHAHN

Wait a moment first . . . [*To* WULKOW.] What do you want?

WULKOW

I'd like to report the birth of . . .

WEHRHAHN

Matter of the public registry. The books, Glasenapp. That is to say, I'll attend to the other affair first. [*To* MRS. WOLFF.] What's the trouble about your daughter? Did Mr. Krueger box her ears again?

MRS. WOLFF

Well, he didn't go that far no time.

WEHRHAHN

What's the trouble, then?

MRS. WOLFF

It's about this here package . . .

WEHRHAHN

[*To* GLASENAPP.] Hasn't Motes been here yet?

GLASENAPP

Not up to this time.

WEHRHAHN

That's incomprehensible. Well, girl, what do you want?

GLASENAPP

It's in the matter of the stolen fur coat, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

Is that so? Can't possibly attend to that to-day. No one can do everything at once. [*To* MRS. WOLFF.] She may come in to-morrow.

Mrs. Wolff

She's tried to talk to you a couple o' times already.

Wehrhahn

Then let her try for a third time to-morrow.

Mrs. Wolff

But Mr. Krueger don't give her no peace no more.

Wehrhahn

What has Mr. Krueger to do with it?

Mrs. Wolff

The girl went to him with the package.

Wehrhahn

What kind of a rag is that? Let me see it.

Mrs. Wolff

It's all connected with the business of the fur coat. Leastways that's what Mr. Krueger thinks.

Wehrhahn

What's wrapped up in those rags, eh?

Mrs. Wolff

There's a green waist-coat what belongs to Mr. Krueger.

Wehrhahn

And you found that?

ADELAIDE

I found it, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

Where did you find it?

ADELAIDE

That was when I was goin' to the train with mama. I was walkin' along this way and there . . .

WEHRHAHN

Never mind about that now. [*To* MRS. WOLFF.] Make your deposition some time soon. We can come back to this matter to-morrow.

MRS. WOLFF

Oh, *I'm* willin' enough . . .

WEHRHAHN

Well, who isn't then?

MRS. WOLFF

Mr. Krueger is so very anxious about it.

WEHRHAHN

Mr. Krueger, Mr. Krueger — I care very little about him. The man just simply annoys me. Things like this cannot be adjusted in a day. He has offered a reward and the matter has been published in the official paper.

Mrs. Wolff

You can't never do enough for him, though.

Wehrhahn

What does that mean: we can't do enough for him? We have recorded the facts in the case. His suspicions fell upon his washerwoman and we have searched her house. What more does he want? The man ought to keep quiet. But, as I said, to-morrow I'm at the service of this affair again.

Mrs. Wolff

It's all the same to us. We c'n come back.

Wehrhahn

Very well, then. To-morrow morning.

Mrs. Wolff

Good mornin'.

Adelaide

[*Dropping a courtsey.*] Good mornin'.

Mrs. Wolff *and* Adelaide *exeunt.*

Wehrhahn

[*Turning over some documents. To* Glasenapp.] I'm curious to see what the result of all this will be. Mr. Motes has finally agreed to offer witnesses. He says the Dreier woman, that old witch of a pastry cook, once stood within earshot when Fleischer expressed himself disrespectfully. How old is the woman, anyhow?

GLASENAPP

Somewhere around seventy, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

A bit confused in her upper story, eh?

GLASENAPP

Depends on how you look at it. She's fairly sensible yet.

WEHRHAHN

I can assure you, Glasenapp, that it would be no end of a satisfaction to me to flutter these dove-cotes here pretty thoroughly. These people ought to be made to feel that they're dealing with somebody, after all. Who absented himself from the festivities on the emperor's birthday? Fleischer, of course. The man is simply capable of anything. He can put on all the innocent expressions he pleases. We know these wolves in sheep's clothing. They're too sweet-tempered to harm a fly, but if they think the occasion has come, the hounds can blow up a whole place. Well, here, at least, it will be made too hot for them!

MOTES

[*Comes in.*] Your servant.

WEHRHAHN

Well, how are things going?

MOTES

Mrs. Dreier said that she would be here around eleven.

WEHRHAHN

This matter will attract quite a little notice. It will, in fact, make a good deal of noise. I know what will be said: "That man Wehrhahn pokes his nose into everything." Well, thank heaven, I'm prepared for that. I'm not standing in this place for my private amusement. I haven't been put here for jest. People think — a justice, why he's nothing but a superior kind of gaoler. In that case they can put some one else here. The gentlemen, to be sure, who appointed me know very well with whom they are dealing. They know to the full the seriousness with which I conceive of my duties. I consider my office in the light of a sacred calling. [*Pause.*] I have reduced my report to the public prosecutor to writing. If I send it off at noon to-day, the command of arrest can reach us by day after to-morrow.

MOTES

Now everybody will be coming down on me.

WEHRHAHN

You know I have an uncle who is a chamberlain. I'll talk to him about you. Confound it all! There comes Fleischer! What does that fellow want? Does he smell a rat by any chance? [*A knocking is heard and* WEHRHAHN *shouts:*] Come in!

FLEISCHER

[*Enters, pale and excited.*] Good morning! [*He receives no answer.*] I should like to lodge infor-

mation which has reference to the robbery recently committed here.

WEHRHAHN

[*With his most penetrating official glance.*] You are Dr. Joseph Fleischer?

FLEISCHER

Quite right. My name is Joseph Fleischer.

WEHRHAHN

And you come to give me some information.

FLEISCHER

If you will permit me, that is what I should like to do. I have made an observation which may, quite possibly, help the authorities to track down the thief in question.

WEHRHAHN

[*Drums on the table with his fingers. He looks around at the others with an expression of affected surprise which tempts them to laughter.*] What is this important observation which you have made?

FLEISCHER

Of course, if you have previously made up your mind to attach no importance to my evidence, I should prefer . . .

WEHRHAHN

[*Quickly and arrogantly.*] What would you prefer?

FLEISCHER

To hold my peace.

WEHRHAHN

[*Turns to* MOTES *with a look expressive of inability to understand* FLEISCHER'S *motives. Then, in a changed tone, with very superficial interest.*] My time is rather fully occupied. I would request you to be as brief as possible.

FLEISCHER

My time is no less preëmpted. Nevertheless I considered it my duty . . .

WEHRHAHN

[*Interrupting.*] You considered it your duty. Very well. Now tell us what you know.

FLEISCHER

[*Conquering himself.*] I went boating yesterday. I had taken Mrs. Wolff's boat and her daughter was rowing.

WEHRHAHN

Are these details necessarily pertinent to the business in hand?

FLEISCHER

They certainly are — in my opinion.

WEHRHAHN

[*Drumming impatiently on the table.*] Very well! Very well! Let's get on!

FLEISCHER

We rowed to the neighbourhood of the locks. A lighter lay at anchor there. The ice, we were able to observe, was piled up there. The lighter had probably not been able to proceed.

WEHRHAHN

H-m. Is that so? That interests us rather less. What is the kernel of this whole story?

FLEISCHER

[*Keeping his temper by main force.*] I must confess that this method of . . . I have come here quite voluntarily, to offer a voluntary service to the authorities.

GLASENAPP

[*Impudently.*] His honour is pressed for time. You are to talk less and state what you have to say briefly and compactly.

WEHRHAHN

[*Vehemently.*] Let's get to business at once. What is it you want?

FLEISCHER

[*Still mastering himself.*] I am concerned that the matter be cleared up. And in the interest of old Mr. Krueger, I will . . .

WEHRHAHN

[*Yawning and bored.*] The light dazzles me; do pull down the shades.

FLEISCHER

On the lighter was an old boatman — probably the owner of the vessel.

WEHRHAHN

[*Yawning as before.*] Yes, most probably.

FLEISCHER

This man sat on his deck in a fur coat which, at a distance, I considered a beaver coat.

WEHRHAHN

[*Bored.*] I might have taken it to be marten.

FLEISCHER

I pulled as close up to him as possible and thus gained a very good view. The man was a poverty-stricken, slovenly boatman and the fur coat seemed by no means appropriate. It was, in addition, a perfectly new coat . . .

WEHRHAHN

[*Apparently recollecting himself.*] I am listening, I am listening! Well? What else?

FLEISCHER

What else? Nothing.

WEHRHAHN

[*Waking up thoroughly.*] I thought you wanted to lodge some information. You mentioned something important.

FLEISCHER

I have said all that I had to say.

WEHRHAHN

You have told us an anecdote about a boatman who wears a fur coat. Well, boatmen do, no doubt, now and then wear such coats. There is nothing new or interesting about that.

FLEISCHER

You may think about that as you please. In such circumstances I have no more to say. [*Exit.*

WEHRHAHN

Well now, did you ever see anything like that? Moreover, the fellow is a thorough fool. A boatman had on a fur coat! Why, has the man gone mad? I possess a beaver coat myself. Surely that doesn't make me a thief.— Confound it all! What's that again? I suppose I am to get no rest to-day at all! [*To* MITTELDORF, *who is standing by the door.*] Don't let anyone else in now! Mr. Motes, do me the favour of going over to my apartment. We can have our discussion there without interruptions. There's Krueger for the hundred and first time. He acts as though he'd been stung by a tarantula. If that old ass continues to plague me, I'll kick him straight out of this room some day.

In the open door KRUEGER *becomes visible, together with* FLEISCHER *and* MRS. WOLFF.

MITTELDORF

[*To* KRUEGER.] His honour can't be seen, Mr. Krueger.

KRUEGER

Nonsense! Not to be seen! I don't care for such talk at all. [*To the others.*] Go right on, right on! I'd like to see!

All enter, KRUEGER *leading the way.*

WEHRHAHN

I must request that there be somewhat more quiet. As you see, I am having a conference at present.

KRUEGER

Go right ahead with it. We can wait. Later you can then have a conference with us.

WEHRHAHN

[*To* MOTES.] Over in my apartment, then, if you please. And if you see Mrs. Dreier, tell her I had rather question her there too. You see for yourself: it isn't possible here.

KRUEGER

[*Pointing to* FLEISCHER.] This gentleman knows something about Mrs. Dreier too. He has some documentary evidence.

MOTES

Your honour's servant. I take my leave.

[*Exit.*

KRUEGER

That's a good thing for *that* man to take.

WEHRHAHN

You will kindly omit remarks of that nature.

KRUEGER

I'll say that again. The man is a swindler.

WEHRHAHN

[*As though he had not heard, to* WULKOW.] Well, what is it? I'll get rid of you first. The records, Glasenapp! — Wait, though! I'll relieve myself of this business first. [*To* KRUEGER.] I will first attend to your affair.

KRUEGER

Yes, I must ask you very insistently to do so.

WEHRHAHN

Suppose we leave that "insistently" quite out of consideration. What request have you to make?

KRUEGER

None at all. I have no request to make. I am here in order to demand what is my right.

WEHRHAHN

Your right? Ah, what is that, exactly?

KRUEGER

My good right. I have been robbed and it is my right that the local authorities aid me in recovering my stolen possessions.

WEHRHAHN

Have you been refused such assistance?

KRUEGER

Certainly not. And that is not possible. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that nothing is being done. The whole affair is making no progress.

WEHRHAHN

You imagine that things like that can be done in a day or two.

KRUEGER

I don't imagine anything, your honour. I have very definite proofs. You are taking no interest in my affairs.

WEHRHAHN

I could interrupt you at this very point. It lies entirely beyond the duties of my office to listen to imputations of that nature. For the present, however, you may continue.

KRUEGER

You could not interrupt me at all. As a citizen of the Prussian state I have my rights. And even if you interrupt me here, there are other places

where I could make my complaint. I repeat that you are not showing any interest in my affair.

WEHRHAHN

[*Apparently calm.*] Suppose you prove that.

KRUEGER

[*Pointing to* MRS. WOLFF *and her daughter.*] This woman here came to you. Her daughter made a find. She didn't shirk the way, your honour, although she is a poor woman. You turned her off once before and she came back to-day . . .

MRS. WOLFF

But his honour didn't have no time, you know.

WEHRHAHN

Go on, please!

KRUEGER

I will. I'm not through yet by any means. What did you say to the woman? You said to her quite simply that you had no time for the matter in question. You did not even question her daughter. You don't know the slightest circumstance: you don't know anything about the entire occurrence.

WEHRHAHN

I will have to ask you to moderate yourself a little.

KRUEGER

My expressions are moderate; they are extremely moderate. I am far too moderate, your honour. My entire character is far too full of moderation. If it were not, what do you think I would say? What kind of an investigation is this? This gentleman here, Dr. Fleischer, came to you to report an observation which he has made. A boatman wears a beaver coat . . .

WEHRHAHN

[*Raising his hand.*] Just wait a moment. [*To* WULKOW.] You are a boatman, aren't you?

WULKOW

I been out on the river for thirty years.

WEHRHAHN

Are you nervous? You seem to twitch.

WULKOW

I reely did have a little scare. That's a fac'.

WEHRHAHN

Do the boatmen on the Spree frequently wear fur coats?

WULKOW

A good many of 'em has fur coats. That's right enough.

WEHRHAHN

This gentleman saw a boatman who stood on his deck wearing a fur coat.

WULKOW

There ain't nothin' suspicious about that, your honour. There's many as has fine coats. I got one myself, in fac'.

WEHRHAHN

You observe: the man himself owns a fur coat.

FLEISCHER

But then he hasn't exactly a beaver coat.

WEHRHAHN

You were not in a position to discover that.

KRUEGER

What? Has this man a beaver coat?

WULKOW

There's many of 'em, I c'n tell you, as has the finest beaver coats. An' why not? We makes enough.

WEHRHAHN

[*Filled with a sense of triumph but pretending indifference.*] Exactly. [*Lightly.*] Now, please go on, Mr. Krueger. That was only a little side-play. I simply wanted to make clear to you the

value of that so-called "observation."— You see now that this man himself owns a fur coat. [*More violently.*] Would it therefore occur to us in our wildest moments to assert that he has stolen the coat? That would simply be an absurdity.

KRUEGER

Wha —? I don't understand a word.

WEHRHAHN

Then I must talk somewhat louder still. And since I am talking to you now, there's something else I might as well say to you — not in my capacity as justice, but simply man to man, Mr. Krueger. A man who is after all an honourable citizen should be more chary of his confidence — he should not adduce the evidence of people . . .

KRUEGER

Are you talking about my associates? *My* associates?

WEHRHAHN

Exactly that.

KRUEGER

In that case you had better take care of yourself. People like Motes, with whom you associate, were kicked out of my house.

FLEISCHER

I was obliged to show the door to this person whom you receive in your private apartment!

KRUEGER

He cheated me out of my rent.

MRS. WOLFF

There ain't many in this village that that man ain't cheated all ways — cheated out o' pennies an' shillin's, an' crowns an' gold pieces.

KRUEGER

He has a regular system of exacting tribute.

FLEISCHER

[*Pulling a document out of his pocket.*] More than that, the fellow is ripe for the public prosecutor. [*He places the document on the table.*] I would request you to read this through.

KRUEGER

Mrs. Dreier has signed that paper herself. Motes tried to inveigle her into committing perjury.

FLEISCHER

She was to give evidence against me.

KRUEGER

[*Putting his hand on* FLEISCHER'S *arm.*] This gentleman is of unblemished conduct and that scoundrel wanted to get him into trouble. And you lend your assistance to such things!

All speak at once.

WEHRHAHN

My patience is exhausted now. Whatever dealings you may have with Motes don't concern me and are entirely indifferent to me. [*To* FLEISCHER.] You'll be good enough to remove that rag!

KRUEGER

[*Alternately to* MRS. WOLFF *and to* GLASENAPP.] That man is his honour's friend; that is his source of information. A fine situation. We might better call him a source of defamation!

FLEISCHER

[*To* MITTELDORF.] I'm not accountable to any one. It's my own business what I do; it's my own business with whom I associate; it's my own business what I choose to think and write!

GLASENAPP

Why you can't hear your own words in this place no more! Your honour, shall I go an' fetch a policeman? I can run right over and get one. Mitteldorf! . . .

WEHRHAHN

Quiet, please! [*Quiet is restored. To* FLEISCHER.] You will please remove that rag.

FLEISCHER

[*Obeys.*] That rag, as you call it, will be forwarded to the public prosecutor.

WEHRHAHN

You may do about that exactly as you please. [*He arises and takes from a case in the wall the package brought by* MRS. WOLFF.] Let us finally dispose of this matter, then. [*To* MRS. WOLFF.] Where did you find this thing?

MRS. WOLFF

It ain't me that found it at all.

WEHRHAHN

Well, who did find it?

MRS. WOLFF

My youngest daughter.

WEHRHAHN

Well, why didn't you bring her with you then?

MRS. WOLFF

She was here, all right, your honour. An' then, I c'n go over an' fetch her in a minute.

WEHRHAHN

That would only serve to delay the whole business again. Didn't the girl tell you anything about it?

KRUEGER

You said it was found on the way to the railway station.

WEHRHAHN

In that case the thief is probably in Berlin. That won't make our search any easier.

KRUEGER

I don't believe that at all, your honour. Mr. Fleischer seems to me to have an entirely correct opinion. The whole business with the package is a trick meant to mislead us.

MRS. WOLFF

Well, well. That's mighty possible.

WEHRHAHN

Now, Mrs. Wolff, you're not so stupid as a rule. Things that are stolen here go in to Berlin. That fur coat was sold in Berlin before we even knew that it was stolen.

MRS. WOLFF

No, your honour, I can't help it, but I ain't quite, not quite of the same opinion. If the thief is in Berlin, why, I ax, does he have to go an' lose a package like that?

WEHRHAHN

Such things are not always lost intentionally.

MRS. WOLFF

Just look at that there package. It's all packed up so nice — the vest, the key, an' the bit o' paper . . .

KRUEGER

I believe the thief to be in this very place.

MRS. WOLFF

[*Confirming him.*] Well, you see, Mr. Krueger.

KRUEGER

I firmly believe it.

WEHRHAHN

Sorry, but I do not incline to that opinion. My experience is far too long . . .

KRUEGER

What? A long experience? H-m!

WEHRHAHN

Certainly. And on the basis of that experience I know that the chance of the coat being here need scarcely be taken into account.

MRS. WOLFF

Well, well, we shouldn't go an' deny things that way, your honour.

KRUEGER

[*Referring to* FLEISCHER.] And then he saw the boatman . . .

WEHRHAHN

Don't bother me with that story. I'd have to go searching people's houses every day with twenty

constables and policemen. I'd have to search every house in the village.

MRS. WOLFF

Then you better go an' start with my house, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

Well, isn't that ridiculous? No, no, gentlemen: that's not the way. That method will lead us nowhither, now or later. You must give me entire freedom of action. I have my own suspicions and will continue to make my observations. There are a number of shady characters here on whom I have my eye. Early in the morning they ride in to Berlin with heavy baskets on their backs, and in the evening they bring home the same baskets empty.

KRUEGER

I suppose you mean the vegetable hucksters. That's what they do.

WEHRHAHN

Not only the vegetable hucksters, Mr. Krueger. And I have no doubt but that your coat travelled in the same way.

MRS. WOLFF

That's possible, all right. There ain't nothin' impossible in *this* world, I tell you.

WEHRHAHN

Well, then! Now, what did you want to announce?

WULKOW

A little girl, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

I will do all that is possible.

KRUEGER

I won't let the matter rest until I get back my coat.

WEHRHAHN

Well, whatever can be done will be done. Mrs. Wolff can use her ears a little.

MRS. WOLFF

The trouble is I don't know how to act like a spy. But if things like that don't come out—there ain't no sayin' what's safe no more.

KRUEGER

You are quite right, Mrs. Wolff, quite right. [*To* WEHRHAHN.] I must ask you to examine that package carefully. The handwriting on the slip that was found in it may lead to a discovery. And day after to-morrow morning, your honour, I will take the liberty of troubling you again. Good morning! [*Exit.*

FLEISCHER

Good morning. [*Exit.*

WEHRHAHN

[*To* WULKOW.] How old are you? — There's something wrong with those two fellows up here. [*He touches his forehead. To* WULKOW.] What is your name?

WULKOW

August Philip Wulkow.

WEHRHAHN

[*To* MITTELDORF.] Go over to my apartment. That Motes is still sitting there and waiting. Tell him I am sorry but I have other things to do this morning.

MITTELDORF

An' you don't want him to wait?

WEHRHAHN

[*Harshly.*] No, he needn't wait!

[MITTELDORF, *exit.*

WEHRHAHN

[*To* MRS. WOLFF.] Do you know this author Motes?

MRS. WOLFF

When it comes to people like that, your honour, I'd rather go an' hold my tongue. There ain't much good that I could tell you.

WEHRHAHN

[*Ironically.*] But you could tell me a great deal that's good about Fleischer.

MRS. WOLFF

He ain't no bad sort, an' that's a fac'.

WEHRHAHN

I suppose you're trying to be a bit careful in what you say.

MRS. WOLFF

No, I ain't much good at that. I'm right out with things, your honour. If I hadn't always gone an' been right out with what I got to say, I might ha' been a good bit further along in the world.

WEHRHAHN

That policy has never done you any harm with me.

MRS. WOLFF

No, not with you, your honour. You c'n stand bein' spoken to honest. Nobody don't need to be sneaky 'round you.

WEHRHAHN

In short: Fleischer is a man of honour.

MRS. WOLFF

That he is! That he is!

WEHRHAHN

Well, you remember my words of to-day.

MRS. WOLFF

An' you remember mine.

WEHRHAHN

Very well. The future will show. [*He stretches himself, gets up, and stamps his feet gently on the floor. To* WULKOW.] This is our excellent washerwoman. She thinks that all people are like herself. [*To* MRS. WOLFF.] But unfortunately the world is differently made. You see human beings from the outside; a man like myself has learned to look a little deeper. [*He takes a few paces, then stops before her and lays his hand on her shoulder.*] And as surely as it is true when I say: Mrs. Wolff is an honest woman; so surely I tell you: this Dr. Fleischer of yours, of whom we were speaking, is a thoroughly dangerous person!

MRS. WOLFF

[*Shaking her head resignedly.*] Well, then I don't know no more what to think . . .

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE CONFLAGRATION

PERSONS:

FIELITZ, *Shoemaker and Spy. Near sixty years old.*

MRS. FIELITZ, *formerly* MRS. WOLFF, *his wife. Of the same age.*

LEONTINE, *her oldest daughter by her first marriage; unmarried; near thirty.*

SCHMAROWSKI, *Architect.*

LANGHEINRICH, *Smith. Thirty years old.*

RAUCHHAUPT, *retired Prussian Constable.*

GUSTAV, *his oldest son, a congenital imbecile.*

MIEZE, LOTTE, TRUDE, } *his daughters.*

LENCHEN, LIESCHEN, MARIECHEN, TIENCHEN, HANNCHEN, } *his daughters.*

DR. BOXER, *a vigorous man of thirty-six. Physician. Of Jewish birth.*

VON WEHRHAHN, *Justice.*

EDE, *Journeyman at* LANGHEINRICH'S.

GLASENAPP, *Clerk in the Justice's Court.*

SCHULZE, *Constable.*

MRS. SCHULZE, *his aunt.*

TSCHACHE, *Constable.*

A FIREMAN.

A BOY.

JANITOR OF THE COURT.

VILLAGE PEOPLE.

Scene: Anywhere in the neighbourhood of Berlin.

THE FIRST ACT

The work shop of the shoemaker FIELITZ. *A low room with blue tinted walls. A window to the right. In each of the other walls a door. Under the window at the right a small platform. Upon it a cobbler's bench and a small table. On the latter a stand upholding three spheres of glass filled with water. Near them stands an unlit coal-oil lamp. In the corner, left, a brown tile oven surrounded by a bench and kitchen utensils of various kinds.*

SHOEMAKER FIELITZ *is still crouching over his work. On the platform and around it old shoes and boots of every size are heaped up.* FIELITZ *is hammering a piece of leather into flexibility.*

MRS. FIELITZ (*formerly* MRS. WOLFF) *is thoughtfully turning over in her hands a little wooden box and a stearin candle. It is toward evening, at the end of September.*

FIELITZ

You get outta this here shop. Go on now!

MRS. FIELITZ

[*Briefly and contemptuously.*] Who d'you think'll come in here now? It's past six.

FIELITZ

You get outta the shop with that trash o' yours.

MRS. FIELITZ

I wish you wouldn't act so like a fool. What's wrong about this here little box, eh? A little box like this ain't no harm.

FIELITZ

[*Working with enraged violence.*] It's somethin' good, ain't it now?

MRS. FIELITZ

[*Still thoughtfully and half in jest.*] The sawdust comes up to here . . . An' then they go an' put a candle plumb in the middle here . . .

FIELITZ

Look here, ma, you're too smart for me! If that there smartness o' yours keeps on, I see myself in gaol one o' these days.

MRS. FIELITZ

[*Harshly.*] I s'ppose you can't listen a bit when a person talks to you. You might pay some attention when I talks to you. Things like that interest a body.

FIELITZ

I takes an interest in my boots, an' I don't take no interest in nothin' else.

Mrs. Fielitz

That's it! O Lordy! That'd be a nice state for us. We'd all go an' starve together. Your cobblin'— there's a lot o' good in that! — They puts the candle in here. Y'understand? This here little box ain't big enough neither. That one over there would be more like. Let's throw them children's shoes out.

[*She turns a box full of children's shoes upside down.*

Fielitz

[*Frightened.*] Don't you go in for no nonsense, y'understand?

Mrs. Fielitz

An' then when they've lit the candle — . . . then they stands it up in the middle o' the box, so's it can't burn the top, o' course. Then you puts it, reel still, up in some attic — Grabow didn't do that different neither — right straight in a heap o' old trash — an' then you goes quiet to Berlin, an' when you comes back . . .

Fielitz

Ssh! Somebody's comin'! Ssh!

Mrs. Fielitz

An' the devil hisself can't go an' prove nothin' against you. [*A protracted silence.*

Fielitz

If it was as simple as all that! But that ain't noways as easy as you thinks. First of all

there's got to be air-holes in here. O' course this here awl —: that'll do for a drill. That thing's got to have a draught, if you want it to catch! If there ain't no draught, it just smothers! Fire's gotta have a draught or it won't burn. Somebody's got to lend a hand here as knows somethin'.

Mrs. Fielitz

Well, that'd be an easy thing for you!

Fielitz

[*Forgetting his point of view in his growing zeal.*] There's gotta be a draught here an' another here! An' it's all gotta be done just right! An' then sawdust an' rags here. An' then you go an' pour some kerosene right in.— There ain't nothin' new in all that. I was out in the world for six years.

Mrs. Fielitz

Well, exactly. That's what I been sayin'.

Fielitz

You c'n do that with a sponge an' you c'n do that with a string. All you gotta do is to steep 'em good an' hard in saltpetre. An' you c'n light that with burning glasses. It c'n be done twenty steps away! — All that's been done before now. There ain't nothin' new in all that to me. I know all about it.

Mrs. Fielitz

An' Grabow's built up again. If he hadn't gone an' taken his courage in both hands, he'd ha' been in the street long ago.

Fielitz

That's all right, if a man's in trouble like water up to his neck an' is goin' to be drowned. Maybe then . . .

Mrs. Fielitz

An' there's many as lets the time slip till he is drowned. [*The doorbell rings.*

Fielitz

Go an' put the box away an' then open the door.

Justice von Wehrhahn *enters, wearing a thick-overcoat, tall boots and a fur cap.*

Wehrhahn

Evening, Fielitz! How about those boots?

Fielitz

They's all right, your honour.

Mrs. Fielitz

You better go an' get a little light so's Mr. von Wehrhahn can see somethin'.

Wehrhahn

Well, how is everything and what are you doing, Mrs. Wolff?

Mrs. Fielitz

I ain't no Mrs. Wolff no more.

WEHRHAHN

She's grown very proud, eh, Fielitz? She carries her head very high? She feels quite set up?

MRS. FIELITZ

Hear that! Marryin's gone to my head? I could ha' lived much better as a widder.

FIELITZ

[*Who has drawn the lasts out of* WEHRHAHN'S *boots.*] Then you might ha' gone an' stayed a widder.

MRS. FIELITZ

If I'd ha' known what kind of a feller you are, I wouldn't ha' been in no hurry. I could ha' gotten an old bandy-legged crittur like you any day o' the week.

WEHRHAHN

Gently, gently!

FIELITZ

Never you mind her. [*With almost creeping servility.*] If you'll be so very kind, your honour, an' have the goodness to pull off your right boot. If you'll let me; I c'n do that. So. An' if you'll be so good now an' put your foot on this here box.

MRS. FIELITZ

[*Holding the burning lamp.*] An' how is the Missis, Baron?

WEHRHAHN

Thank you, she's quite well. But she's still lamenting her Mrs. Wolff . . .

MRS. FIELITZ

Well, you see, I couldn't do that no more reely. I washed thirty years an' over for you. You c'n get enough o' anything in that time, I tell you. I c'n show you my legs some day. The veins is standin' out on 'em, thick as your fist. That comes from the everlastin' standin' up at the tub! An' I got frost boils all over me and the rheumatiz in every limb. They ain't no end to the doctorin' I gotta do! I just gotta wrap myself up in cotton, an' anyhow I'm cold all day.

WEHRHAHN

Certainly, Mrs. Wolff, I can well believe that.

MRS. FIELITZ

There was a time an' I'd work against anybody. I had a constitootion! You couldn't ha' found one in ten like it. But nowadays . . . O Lord! Things is lookin' different.

FIELITZ

You c'n holler a little louder if you want to.

WEHRHAHN

I can't blame you, of course, Mrs. Fielitz. Any one who has worked as you have may well consider herself entitled to some rest.

Mrs. Fielitz

An' then, you see, things keep goin'. We got our livin' right along. [*She give* Fielitz *a friendly nudge on the head.*] An' he does his part all right now. We ain't neither of us lazy, so to speak. If only a body could keep reel well! But Saturday I gotta go to the doctor again. He goes and electrilises me with his electrilising machine, you know. I ain't sayin' but what it helps me. But first of all there's the expenses of the trip in to Berlin an' then every time he electrilises me that costs five shillin's. Sometimes, you know, a person don't know where to get the money.

Fielitz

You go ahead an' ram your money down doctors' throats!

Wehrhahn

[*Treads firmly with his new shoe.*] None of us are getting any younger, Mrs. Fielitz. I'm beginning to feel that quite distinctly myself. Perfectly natural. Nothing to be done about it. We've simply got to make up our minds to that.—And, anyhow, you oughtn't to complain. I heard it said a while ago that your son-in-law had passed his examinations very well. In that case everything is going according to your wishes.

Mrs. Fielitz

That's true, of course, an' it did make me reel happy too. In the first place he'll be able to get along much better now that he's somethin' like an architect . . . an' then, he deserved it all

ways.— The kind o' time he had when he was a child! Well, I ain't had no easy time neither, but a father like that . . .

WEHRHAHN

Schmarowski is a fellow of solid worth. I never had any fears for him. Your Adelaide was very lucky there.— You remember my telling you so at the time. You came running over to me that time, you recall, when the engagement was almost broken, and I sent you to Pastor Friederici: — that shows you the value of spiritual advice. A young man is a young man and however Christian and upright his life, he's apt to forget himself once in a while. That's where the natural function of the spiritual adviser comes in.

MRS. FIELITZ

Yes, yes, I s'ppose you're right enough there. An' I'll never forget what the pastor did for us that time! If Schmarowski had gone an' left the girl, she'd never have lived through it, that's certain.

WEHRHAHN

There we've got an instance of what happens when a church and a pastor are in a place. The house of God that we've built together has brought many a blessing. So, good evening and good luck to you.— Oh, what I was going to say, Fielitz: the celebration takes place on Monday morning. You will be there surely?

MRS. FIELITZ

Naturally he'll come.

FIELITZ

Sure an' certain.

WEHRHAHN

I would hardly know what to do without you, Fielitz. In the meantime, come in for a moment on Sunday. I'm proposing certain points . . . certain very marked points, and we must pull together vigorously. So, good evening! Don't forget — we've got to have a strong parade.

FIELITZ

That's right. You can't do them things without one. [*Exit* WEHRHAHN.

FIELITZ

You go an' take that candle out! Will you, please?

MRS. FIELITZ

You're as easy scared as a rabbit, Anton! That's what you are — a reg'lar rabbit.

She takes the candle out of the little box. Almost at the same moment RAUCHHAUPT *opens the door and looks in.*

RAUCHHAUPT

Good evenin'. Am I intrudin'?

FIELITZ

— — — —

Mrs. Fielitz

Aw, come right into our parlour!

Rauchhaupt

Ain't Langheinrich the smith come in yet?

Mrs. Fielitz

Was he goin' to come? No, he ain't been here.

Rauchhaupt

We made a special engagement.— I brought along the cross too. Here, Gustav! Bring that there cross in! [Gustav *brings in a cross of cast iron with an inscription on it.*] Go an' put it down on that there box.

Fielitz

[*Quickly.*] No, never mind, Edward, that'll break.

Rauchhaupt

Then you c'n just lean it against the wall.

Mrs. Fielitz

So you got through with it at last. [*Calls out through the door.*] Leontine! You come down a minute!

Rauchhaupt

Trouble is I had so much to do. I'm buildin' a new hot house, you know.

Mrs. Fielitz

Another one, eh? Ain't that a man for you! You're a reg'lar mole, Rauchhaupt. The way that man keeps diggin' around in the ground.

Rauchhaupt

A man feels best when he's doin' that. That's what we're all made of — earth: an' that's what we're all goin' to turn to again. Why shouldn't we be diggin' around in the earth? [*He helps himself from the snuff-box which* Fielitz *holds out to him.*] That's got a earthy smell, too, Fielitz. That smells like good, fresh earth.

Leontine *enters. A pair of scissors hangs by her side; she has a thimble on her finger.*

Leontine

Here I am, mama. What's up?

Mrs. Fielitz

He just brought in papa his hephitaph.

Leontine *and* Mrs. Fielitz *regard the cross thoughtfully.*

Mrs. Fielitz

Light the candle for me, girl. [*She hands her the tallow-candle with which she has been experimenting.*] We wants to study the writin' a bit.

Rauchhaupt

I fooled around with that thing a whole lot. But I got it to please me in the end. You c'n

go an' look through the whole cemetery three times over and you'll come away knowin' this is the finest inscription you c'n get. I went an' convinced myself of that.

[*He sits down on the low platform and fills his nose anew with snuff.*

Mrs. Fielitz *holds the lighted lamp and puzzles out the inscription.*

Mrs. Fielitz

Here rests in . . .

Leontine

[*Reading on.*] In God.

Rauchhaupt

That's what I said: in God. I was goin' to write first: in the Lord. But that's gettin' to be so common.

Mrs. Fielitz

[*Reads on with trembling voice.*] Here rests in God the unforgotten carpenter . . . [*Weeping aloud.*] Oh, no, I tell you, it's too awful! That man — he was the best man in the world, he was. A man like that, you c'n take my word for it, you ain't likely to find no more these days.

Leontine

[*Reading on.*] . . . the unforgotten carpenter Mr. Julian Wolff . . . [*She snivels.*

Fielitz

— Don't you be takin' on now, y'understand? No corpse ain't goin' to come to life for all your howlin'. [*He hands the whiskey bottle to* Rauchhaupt.] Here, Edward, that'll do you good. Them goin's on don't.

[*He gets up and brushes off his blue apron with the air of a man who has completed his day's work.*

Rauchhaupt

[*Pointing with the bottle.*] Them lines there I made up myself. I'll say 'em over for you; listen now:

"The hearts of all to sin confess" . . .

'Tain't everybody c'n do that neither! —

"The hearts of all to sin confess,
The beggar's and the king's no less.
But this man's heart from year to year
Was spotless and like water clear."

[*The women weep more copiously. He continues.*] I gotta go over that with white paint. An' this part here about God is goin' to be Prussian blue. [*He drinks.*

The smith Langheinrich *enters.*

Langheinrich

[*Regarding* Leontine *desirously.*] Well now, look here, Rauchhaupt, old man, I been lookin' for you half an hour! I thought I was to come

an' fetch you, you chucklehead.— Well, are you pleased with the job?

Mrs. Fielitz

Oh, go an' don't bother me, any of you! If a person loses a man like that one, how's she goin' to get along with you jackasses afterwards!

Fielitz

Come on, man, an' pull up a stool. You just let her get back to her right mind.

Langheinrich

[*With sly merriment.*] That's right, I always said so myself: this here dyin' is a invention of the devil.

Mrs. Fielitz

We was married for twenty years an' more. An' there wasn't so much as one angry word between us. An' the way that man was honest. Not a penny, no,— he never cheated any man of a penny in all his days. An' sober! He didn't so much as know what whiskey was like. You could go an' put the bottle before him an' he wouldn't look at it. An' the way he brought up his children! What *d'you* think about, but playin' cards and swillin' liquor . . .

Leontine

Gustav is poking out his tongue at me.

RAUCHHAUPT

[*Takes hold of a cobbler's last and throws himself enragedly upon* GUSTAV, *who has been making faces at* LEONTINE *and has poked out his tongue at her.*] You varmint! I'll break your bones! — That rotten crittur is goin' to be the death o' me yet. I just gets so mad sometimes I think it's goin' to be the death o' me.

LANGHEINRICH

The poor crittur ain't got his right senses.

RAUCHHAUPT

I wish to God the dam' brat was dead. I'll get so dam' wild some day, if he ain't, that I'll go an' kill my own flesh an' blood.

FIELITZ

I'd go an' have him locked up in the asylum. Then you don't have the worry of him no more. D'you want me to write out a petition for you?

RAUCHHAUPT

Don't I know all about petitions? What does they say then: he ain't dangerous bein' at large.— The whole world ain't nothin' but a asylum. It ain't dangerous, o' course, that he fires bricks at me, an' unscrews locks and steals house keys — oh, no, that ain't considered dangerous. No, an' it's all right for him to eat my tulip bulbs. I c'n just go ahead an' do the best I can.

your own profession. I was honourably retired. He don't like that. He ain't sooted with that. All right; all that may be so. An' that I own my own lot, an' that my old woman died. Sure, it ain't no use denyin' it! I made a few crowns outta all that. An' that my gardenin' brings in somethin'— well, he don't like to see it. So then it's easy to say: Rauchhaupt? He don't need no help. He c'n take care o' hisself. An' that's the end of it.

MRS. FIELITZ

Fred Grabow, he's all right now!

LANGHEINRICH

[*Eagerly.*] An' he's got me to thank for it. Only thing is, I pretty near got into a dam' mess myself that time. You see, I'm captain of the hook an' ladder. Well, I says to my boys, says I: — I don't know but I must ha' had more'n I could carry. The whole crowd was pretty well full! — Well, I says to my boys: Sail right in an' see that there ain't a stone left standin', 'cause if there is, Grabow'll get one reduction of insurance after another an' then the whole thing ain't no good to him. I guess I hollered that out a bit too loud. So when I takes a step or two backward I thinks all hell's broke loose, 'cause there stands Constable Schulze an' stares at me. Your health, says I, your health, captain! — Grabow, you know, was treatin' to beer! — An' then Schulze was real sociable and took a drink with me.

Mrs. Fielitz

It's queer that nothin' don't come out there. That fellow ain't a bit cute. How did he manage to do it?

Langheinrich

Everybody likes Fritz Grabow.

Mrs. Fielitz

He ain't got sense enough to count up to three. An' anyhow he had to go an' take oath.

Rauchhaupt

Takin' oath? Aw, that ain't so much! I'll just tell you how 'tis, 'cause you never can't tell. Who knows about it? Anybody might have to do that some day. All you do is to twist off one o' your breeches buttons while you goes ahead and swears reel quiet. You just try it. That's easy as slidin'. [*General laughter.*

Mrs. Fielitz

He's got one o' his jokin' spells again. I won't have to go an' twist off a button, I c'n tell you. Things can't get that way with me.— But tell me this: whose turn is it goin' to be now? It's about time for somebody, you know. Somethin's got to burn pretty soon now.

Langheinrich

It could be most anybody. Things is lookin' pretty poor over at Strombergers. The rain's

comin' right down into his sittin' room.— Well, good evenin'. A man's got to have his joke.

Mrs. Fielitz

But who's goin' to drink my hot toddy now?

Fielitz

You stay right where you are!

Langheinrich

Can't be done. I gotta be goin'. [*He puts an arm around* Leontine, *who frees herself carelessly and with a contemptuous expression.*] — If mother don't hear my hammerin' downstairs she'll be swimmin' away in tears an' the bed with her when I gets home.

Leontine

That's nothin' but jealousy, mama.

Mrs. Fielitz

Maybe it is, an' maybe she's got reason. You go on up to your work.— How is the Missis?

Langheinrich

Pretty low. What c'n you expect?

Leontine

You'll be drivin' me to work till I gets consumption.

Mrs. Fielitz

If you get consumption, it won't be your dress-makin' that's the cause of it. You act as much like a ninny as if you was a man.

Langheinrich

[*Putting his arms around* Mrs. Fielitz.] Come now, young woman, don't be so cross! Young people wants to have their fling — that's all. An' they'll have it, if it's only with Constable Schulze.

[*Exit.*

Mrs. Fielitz

Now what's the meanin' o' that?

Rauchhaupt

Wait there a minute an' I'll join you.

[*He gets up and motions to* Gustav, *who lifts the iron cross again.*

Mrs. Fielitz

Why d'you go an' run off all of a sudden?

Rauchhaupt

I gotta go an' get rid o' some work.

[*Exit with* Gustav.

Mrs. Fielitz

What's the trouble with you an' Langheinrich again? You act like a fool — that's what you do!

LEONTINE

There ain't no trouble. I want him to leave me alone.

MRS. FIELITZ

He'll be willin' to do that all right! If you're goin' to turn up your nose an' wriggle around that way, you won't have to take much trouble to get rid o' him. He don't need nothin' like that!

LEONTINE

But he's a married man.

MRS. FIELITZ

So he is. Let him be. You got no sense 'cause you was born a fool. You got a baby and no husband; Adelaide's got a husband an' no baby.

[LEONTINE *goes slowly out.*

MRS. FIELITZ

If she'd only go an' take advantage o' her chances. There ain't no tellin' how soon Langheinrich'll be a widower.

FIELITZ

I don't know's I like to see the way Constable Schulze runs after that girl.

MRS. FIELITZ

[*Sententiously.*] You can't run your head through no stone walls. [*She sits down, takes out a little notebook and turns its leaves.*] You got a

office. All right. Why shouldn't you have? Things is *as* they is. But havin' a office you got to look out all around. You just let Constable Schulze alone! Did you read the letter from Schmarowski?

FIELITZ

Aw, yes, sure. I got enough o' him all right. I wish somebody'd given me the money — half the money — that feller's had the use of. But no: nobody never paid no attention to me. Nobody sent me to no school o' architecture.

MRS. FIELITZ

I'd like to know what you got against Schmarowski! You're pickin' at him all the time.

FIELITZ

Hold on! Not me! He ain't no concern o' mine. But every time you open your mouth I gets ready to bet ten pairs o' boots that you're goin' to talk about Schmarowski.

MRS. FIELITZ

Did he do you any harm, eh? Well?

FIELITZ

No, I can't say as he has. Not that I know. An' I wouldn't advise him to try neither. Only when I sees him I gets kind o' sick at my stomick. You oughta have married him yourself.

Mrs. Fielitz

If I had been thirty years younger — sure enough.

Fielitz

Well, why don't you go an' move over to your daughter then! Go right on! Hurry all you can an' go to Adelaide's. Then they got hold of you good and tight an' you c'n get rid o' your savin's.

Mrs. Fielitz

That's an ambitious man. He don't have to wait for me; that's sure! — there ain't no gettin' ahead with your kind. Instead o' you fellows helpin' each other, you're always hittin' out at each other. Now Schmarowski — he's a wide-awake kind o' man. No money ain't been wasted on him. You needn't be scared: he'll make his way all right.— But if you knew just a speck o' somethin' about life, you'd know what you'd be doin' too.

Fielitz

Me? How's that? Why me exactly?

Mrs. Fielitz

What was it that there bricklayer boss told me? I saw him one day when he was full; they was just raisin' that church. He says: Schmarowski, says he, that's a sly dog. An' he knew why he was sayin' that. Them plans o' his takes 'em all in.

FIELITZ

I ain't got no objection to his takin' 'em in.

MRS. FIELITZ

He ain't the kind o' man to sit an' draw till he's blind an' let the bricklayers get all the profit.

FIELITZ

Well, I ain't made the world.

MRS. FIELITZ

No, nor you ain't goin' to stop it neither.

FIELITZ

An' I don't want to.

MRS. FIELITZ

You ain't goin' to stop it, Fielitz — not the world an' not me. That's settled.—

[*She has said this in a slightly ironical way, yet with a half embarrassed laugh. She now puts away her little book excitedly.*

FIELITZ

I can't get to understand reel straight. I'm always thinkin' there's somethin' wrong with you.

MRS. FIELITZ

Maybe there was somethin' wrong with Grabow too, eh? I s'ppose that's the reason he's livin' in his new house this day.— I wish there'd

be somethin' like that wrong with you onct in a while. But if somebody don't pull an' poke at you, you'd grow fast to the stool you're sittin' on.

FIELITZ

[*With decision.*] Mother, put that there thing outta your mind. I tell you that in kindness now. I ain't goin' to lend my help to no such thing. Because why? I knows what that means. Is I goin' to jump into that kind of a mess again? No, I ain't young enough for that no more.

MRS. FIELITZ

Just because you're an old feller you oughta be thinkin' about it all the more. How long are you goin' to be able to work along here. You don't get around to much no more now. You cobbled around on Wehrhahn's shoes! It took more'n two weeks.

FIELITZ

Well, mother, you needn't lie that way.

MRS. FIELITZ

That cobblin' o' yours — that ain't worth a damn. I ain't much good no more an' you ain't. That's a fact. I don't excep' myself at all. An' if people like us don't go an' get somethin' they c'n fall back on, they got to go beggin' in the end anyhow. You c'n kick against that all you want to.

FIELITZ

It's a queer thing about you, mother. It's just like as if the devil hisself got a hold o' you. First it just sort o' peeps up, an' God knows where it comes from. Sometimes it's there an' sometimes it's gone. An' then it'll come back again sudden like an' then it gets hold o' you an' don't let you go no more. I've known some tough customers in my time, mother, but when you gets took that way — then I tell you, you makes the cold shivers run down my back.

MRS. FIELITZ

[*Has taken out her notebook again and become absorbed in it.*] What did you think about all this? We're insured here for seven thousand.

FIELITZ

What I thought? I didn't think nothin'.

MRS. FIELITZ

Well, there ain't any value to this place excep' what's in the lot itself.

FIELITZ

[*Gets up and puts on his coat.*] You just leave me alone, y'understand?

MRS. FIELITZ

Well, ain't it true? You just stop your foolin'. I seen that long ago, before we was ever married. Schmarowski told me that ten times over, that this here is the proper place for a big house.

An' anybody as has any sense c'n see that it's so. Now just look for yourself: over there, that's the drug shop! An' a bit across the way to the left is the post office. An' then a little ways on is the baker an' he's built hisself a nice new shop. Four noo villas has gone up and if, some day, we gets the tramway out here — we'll be right in the midst o' things.

FIELITZ

[*About to go.*] Good evenin'.

MRS. FIELITZ

Are you goin' out this time o' day?

FIELITZ

Yes, 'cause I can't stand that no more.— If I'd known the kind of a crittur you are . . . only I didn't know nothin' about it . . . I'd ha' thought this here marryin' over a good bit — yes, a good bit.

MRS. FIELITZ

You? Is that what you'd ha' thought over, eh?

FIELITZ

Is I goin' to let myself be put up to things like that? . . .

MRS. FIELITZ

A whole lot o' thinkin' over you'd ha' done! You ain't done any thinkin' all the days o' your life. A great donkey like you . . . an' thinkin'.

Well! A fine mess would come of it if you took to thinkin'.

FIELITZ

Mother, I axes you to consider that . . .

MRS. FIELITZ

Put you up? To what? What is I puttin' you up to? — This here old shed is goin' to burn down sometime. It's goin' to burn down one time or 'nother, if it don't first come topplin' down over our heads. It's squeezed in here between the other houses in a way to make a person feel ashamed, if he looks at it.

FIELITZ

Mother, I axes you to consider . . .

MRS. FIELITZ

Aw, I wish you'd clear out o' the front door this minute! I'm goin' to pack up my things pretty soon too. An' you c'n go over to the justice for all I care. I been puttin' you up to things, you know!

FIELITZ

Mother, I axes you to consider that . . . Look out that you don't go an' get a black eye! 'Cause I, if I . . .

MRS. FIELITZ

[*With a gesture as though about to push him out.*] Get out! Just get out! It'll be good riddance! The sooner the better! What are you dawdlin' for?

FIELITZ

[*Beside himself.*] Mother, I'll hit you one across the . . . You're goin' to put me out, eh? What? Outta my shop? Is this here your shop? I'll learn you! Just wait!

MRS. FIELITZ

Well, I'm waitin'. Why don't you start? You're that kind of a man, are you? Come right on! Come on now! You got the courage! I'll hold my breath or maybe I'd blow you right into Berlin.

FIELITZ

[*Hurls a boot against the wall in his impotent rage.*] I'll break every stick in this here shop! To hell with the whole business: that's what I says! I must ha' been just ravin' mad! There I goes an' burdens myself with a devil of a woman like that, an' I might ha' lived as comfortable as can be! She killed off one husband an' now I'm dam' idjit enough to take his place! But you're goin' to find out! It ain't goin' to be so easy this time! I'll first kick you out before I'll let you get the best o' me! Not me! No, sir! You c'n believe that!

MRS. FIELITZ

You needn't exert yourself that much, Fielitz . . .

FIELITZ

Not me! Not me! You c'n depend on that! You ain't agoin' to down me! You c'n take my word for it. [*He sits down, exhausted.*

Mrs. Fielitz

Maybe you might like throwin' some more boots. There's plenty of 'em around here — I s'ppose you married me for love, eh?

Fielitz

God knows why I did!

Mrs. Fielitz

If you'll go an' study it out, maybe you'll know why. Maybe it was out o' pity? Eh? Maybe not.— Or maybe it was the money I had loaned out? — Well, you see! I s'ppose that was it.— You c'n live a hundred years for my part! But it's always the same thing. 'Twasn't much different with Julius neither. If things had gone his way, I wouldn't have nothin' saved this day neither. The trouble is a person is too good to you fellers.

Fielitz

An' outta goodness you want me to go an' take a match an' set fire to the roof over my head?

Mrs. Fielitz

You knew that you'd have to go an' build. I said that to myself right off, an' buildin' costs money. There ain't no gettin' away from that fact. An' the few pennies we has ain't more'n a beginnin'. If we had what you might call a real house here . . . Schmarowski, he'd build us one that'd make all the others look like nothin' . . . you could have a fine shop here. We might

put a few hundred dollars into it an' sell factory shoes. If you'd want to take in repairin', you could get a journeyman an' put him here. An' if you wanted to go an' make some new shoes yourself, you could take the time for all I care.

FIELITZ

I don't know! I s'ppose I ain't got sense enough for them things. I thought I'd get hold o' a bit o' money . . . I thought I'd be able to lay out a bit o' money! Buildin' a little annex of a shop — that's good fun. I thought it all out to myself like — with nice shelves and things like that . . . an' I planned to hang up a big clock an' such. An' now you sit on your money bag like an old watch dog.

MRS. FIELITZ

That money — it ain't to be thrown away so easy. 'Twas earned too bitter hard for that.

FIELITZ

. . . You forgets that I've been in trouble before. Is I to go an' get locked up again?

MRS. FIELITZ

Never mind, Fielitz, to-morrow is another day. A person mustn't go an' take things that serious! I was more'n half jokin' anyhow.— Go over to Grabow's an' drink a glass o' beer! . . . We must all be satisfied 's best we can. An' even if you can't go an' open a shoe shop, an' even if you gotta worry along cobblin' an' can't buy no clock — well, a good conscience is worth somethin' too.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE SECOND ACT

The smithy of LANGHEINRICH. *The little house protrudes at an angle into the village street. The shed that projects over the smithy is supported by wooden posts. The empty space below the shed is used for the storage of tools and materials. Wheels are leaned against the wood, a plough, wheel-tyres, pieces of pig iron, etc. An anvil stands in the open, too, and several working stools. From behind the house, jutting out diagonally, a wooden wagon is visible. The left front wheel has been taken off and a windlass supports the axle.*

Through the door that leads to the shop one sees smithy fires and bellows.

Opposite the smithy, on the left side of the village street which, taking a turn, is lost to view in the background, there is a board fence. A small locked gate opens upon the street.

A cloudy, windy day.

DR. BOXER, *in a slouch hat and light overcoat, stands holding a heavy smith's hammer at arm's length.* EDE *has a horseshoe in his right hand, a smaller hammer in his left, and is looking on.*

Ede

[*Counts.*] . . . twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four an' one makes twenty-five an' another makes twenty-six.— Great guns, you're ahead o' me now. An' twenty-seven, an' twenty-eight, an' twenty-nine an' thirty. My respects, Doctor. That's all right. Is that the effect o' the sea air?

Dr. Boxer

It may be. You see I haven't quite forgotten the trick.

Ede

No, you haven't. That's pretty good. Now let's try it with weights, though. I c'n hold up a hundred an' fifty pounds, Doctor. How about yourself?

Dr. Boxer

I don't know. It remains to be seen.

Ede

What? You think you c'n lift a hundred weight an' a half? You're a little bit of a giant, ain't you? You didn't learn that on board ship. I thought you travelled as a sawbones an' not as a strong man! — Look at that little man over there goin' into Mrs. Fielitz' house. That's her son-in-law.

Dr. Boxer

He looks very much like a bishop.

Ede

Right enough! That's what he is — Bishop Schmarowski.— You c'n knock! The old woman's out and she took her cobbler with her. There won't be nothin' to get there to-day.— You see, Doctor, when that fellow goes there he wants money. If he weren't hard up he wouldn't come.

Dr. Boxer

The Fielitzes went in to Berlin to-day; I met them this morning at the railway station. Tell me: *he* isn't quite right in his mind, is he?

Ede

How so? That wasn't never noticed. He's a pretty keen fellow . . . No, I couldn't say that ***he's*** crazy.

Dr. Boxer

He talked a mixture of idiotic nonsense and looked away from me while he was talking. The fellow looked like an evil conscience personified. But I don't suppose he has a conscience.

Ede

By the way: that time they came down on you an' made a search in your house — that fellow Fielitz had his hand in it. He helped get you into that pickle.

[Mrs. Schulze *puts her head out at the attic window.*

Mrs. Schulze

Ede!

Ede

What?

Mrs. Schulze

Ain't Mr. Langheinrich back yet?

Ede

Well, o' course he is, naturally. [Mrs. Schulze *disappears and* Ede *withdraws under the shed.*] Quick! Take this hammer, will you, Doctor, an' hammer away a bit. If you kept up your strength the way you have, you ain't forgot about that neither.

Dr. Boxer

I went at locksmith's work like the deuce when there was nothing to do on board ship. That gave me a very good chance.

Ede

You're a doctor an' you're a smith an' . . . I guess you're a sausage maker too!

Dr. Boxer

I even made sausages once.

Ede

Nobody didn't want to eat them, I guess.

Dr. Boxer

I wouldn't have advised any one to do so either. The sausages were mainly filled with arsenic. The rats scarcely left us space to turn around in.

Ede

[*About to set to work.*] Ugh! That wouldn't be no kind o' sausage for me. Come now, Doctor, go at it! We wants the missis to think that two people is workin' here or she'll never stop axin' questions.

Dr. Boxer

Where did Langheinrich go so early?

Ede

That's a secret all right — the kind o' secret that all the sparrows on the gutters is chirpin'.— Doctor, roll that wheel over here, will you? You got a chance now to deserve well, as they says, o' the Prussian state, 'cause this here waggon belongs to the government forester.— That sort o' thing can't do you no harm.

Dr. Boxer

No. And anyhow I ought to stand in with people.

[*He rolls the wheel slowly along; it escapes him and glides backwards.*

Ede

That ain't so easy. Them people has long memories. [*He catches the wheel.*] Hold on there!

No goin' backward! I'm for progress, I am, Doctor! I'm willin' to fight for that!

Dr. Boxer

But you must be careful of your fingers. [*He puts on a leathern apron.*] Is Langheinrich going to be gone long?

Ede

[*Whistles.*] That depends on how hard it is!

Dr. Boxer

Why do you whistle so significantly?

Ede

That's a gift o' my family. All my eleven brothers an' sisters is musicians. I'm the only one that's a smith. [*For a space both work at the wheel in silence. Then* Ede *continues.*] 'Twouldn't be a bad stage play, I tell you. You wouldn't have to be scared o' riskin' somethin' on that. You'd make money! That's somethin' fine — specially for young people! You been away here a good long while, that's the reason you don't know what's what. I could tell you a few little things that happen around here in bright daylight. — D'you know that Leontine?

Dr. Boxer

Very sorry indeed, but I don't.

Ede

No? An' then you pretend that this is your home an' don't know that girl. Somethin' wrong with you!

DR. BOXER

Oh, yes, yes, Leontine! Mrs. Wolff's daughter! I once got the deuce of a flogging on her account.

EDE

Well, I wish you'd ha' been here two hours ago. Well, first of all that same girl slouched by here . . . No! First of all her mother an' father went away . . . 'twasn't more'n dawn yet! Then Leontine at about eight. She looked all around an' waited an' made lovin' eyes in this direction an' then walked by. You should ha' seen Langheinrich. "Sweetheart, where are you goin'?"— Then, after a while comes Constable Schulze and goes after her.— That was too much for Langheinrich. Off with his apron an' there he goes, quick 's a stag. That's the way it was. You could ha' observed that: the rest ain't to be observed.— There's Langheinrich hurryin' back now. [*He at once sets zealously to work and pretends to discover* LANGHEINRICH, *who is approaching hastily and vigorously at this moment.*] Well, at last! Good thing you're here! No end o' askin' after you. Did you catch her?

LANGHEINRICH

[*Brusquely.*] Catch what?

EDE

I meant the 'bus.

LANGHEINRICH

Hold your . . .! I had business to attend to. — Well now, I'll give a dollar if this here ain't Dr. Boxer! Why, how are you? How are things goin'? An' what are you doin' nowadays? Did your ship come in? You been away now — lemme see — that must be three years, eh? Sure. That's . . . well, time passes.

DR. BOXER

I want to settle down here, Langheinrich. That is to say, I have that intention if it's possible. I should like to try my luck at home for a change.

LANGHEINRICH

Things is best at home, that's right. O' course, there's one here now, a doctor I mean, but he ain't good for much. They say somethin' queer happened to him onct — got his ears boxed too hard or somethin'. An' they say that made him kind o' melancholious. That ain't much good for his patients! No sick man can't get well through that. I'll send for you, Doctor, if I need help.

DR. BOXER

I'll extract my first dozen wisdom teeth free of charge. So you'll be glad if you don't need me soon.

LANGHEINRICH

Well, I . . . fact is . . . my wife is sick.

MRS. SCHULZE *comes hurriedly from the house.*

Mrs. Schulze

It's a mighty good thing that you're here. D'you hear? That whimperin' goes right on.

Langheinrich

Doctor, I'm goin' to ax you somethin' now: d'you know any cure for jealousy? You see, it's this way: We had a baby, an' I'd be lyin' if I said I wasn't mighty well pleased. An' why shouldn't I be? But now my wife is sick. She can't get up an' she don't want me to budge from the side o' her bed. She screams an' she scolds an' she reproaches me. Sometimes I reely don't know what to do no more.

Mrs. Schulze

You better go upstairs a bit first.

Ede

Do give him a chance to get his breath!

Langheinrich

Oh, pshaw! Never you mind! I c'n attend to that right off.

[*After he has taken off his hat and coat and slipped on wooden shoes he hurries into the house.*

Ede

Well, what d'you think o' that?

DR. BOXER

He's a cheerful soul — more so, if possible, than he used to be. It does one good to find a man that way.

EDE

Only that I axed after Leontine, that riled him more'n a little bit all right.

MRS. SCHULZE

[*To* EDE, *watchfully:*] Where was the boss so early this mornin'?

EDE

In Lichtenberg, attendin' a dance.

MRS. SCHULZE

The treatment that woman's gettin' is all wrong, Doctor. I don't mix in what don't concern me. But the way she's treated, that ain't no kind o' treatment, I c'n tell you. I told that Majunke man too that the missis was goin' to the dogs this way.

DR. BOXER

But Dr. Majunke is very capable. I know him to be an excellent physician.

MRS. SCHULZE

[*Interrupting.*] Sure, sure, an' that's true. 'Course he's capable. That's right, an' so he is. But, you see, he just won't prescribe nothin' . . .

Dr. Boxer

What should he prescribe? Let the people save their money.

Mrs. Schulze

But that's just what people don't want to do. It's like this: medicine's got to be. If there ain't none they says: how c'n the doctor help us?

Dr. Boxer

Mrs. Langheinrich never was strong. Even years ago when she used to sew for us . . .

Mrs. Schulze

That's the way it is. She's a little bit humpbacked; that's right. That's the way women is, though, Doctor! A seamstress — that's what she was . . .! She sewed an' she sewed and saved up a little money . . .! An' what kind of a bargain is it she's got now. A handsome feller an' sickness an' worry an' no rest no more by day or night.

Langheinrich *returns from the house.*

Langheinrich

[*Tapping* Mrs. Schulze's *shoulder somewhat roughly.*] Hurry now! Go on up! It's all arranged an' settled. To-morrow I'm goin' to take her to the clinic.

Mrs. Schulze

That ain't goin' to be no easy work!

LANGHEINRICH

[*Lifts a great can of water to his mouth.*] I can't help that. Things is as they is. [*He takes an enormously long draught from the tin can. Putting it down:*] Ede, drive them ducks away!

EDE

[*Acting as though he were driving away ducks, flaps his leathern apron and rattles his wooden shoes.*] Shoo! Shoo! Shoo! Chuck! Chuck! Chuck!

MRS. SCHULZE *retires into the house, shaking her head.*

LANGHEINRICH

Them ducks is your regular fire eaters. There don't need nothin' but for some sparks to fly off an', right straight off, they gobbles 'em down. Then we gets what you might call roast duck that never meant to be roasted. An' my old woman she ain't no friend o' that.

RAUCHHAUPT *looks over the fence to the left.*

LANGHEINRICH

There's been a big fire again over there behind Landsberg. All the houses on a great estate is ashes.

RAUCHHAUPT

Did you maybe see Gustav anywhere?

LANGHEINRICH

Mornin', old boy! No, not me! Has he gone an' run off again?

RAUCHHAUPT

I ordered him to go over to the Fielitzes.

LANGHEINRICH

The Fielitzes have all gone in to town.

RAUCHHAUPT

I don't know, but there's a kind o' burned smell in the air . . . Ouch! [*He distorts his face in pain and grasps his leg.*] Ain't Leontine here?

LANGHEINRICH

Naw, she had to go to court to-day. Always the same trouble with the alimony. That confounded feller, he don't pay.

RAUCHHAUPT

[*Calls out.*] Gustav! [*He listens and then turns leisurely back to the little gate. The wind worries and drives him.*] Gustav!

LANGHEINRICH

Stiff wind coming up, all right! [RAUCHHAUPT *disappears.*] Ede!

EDE

All right.

LANGHEINRICH

Let's get to work now! [*He spits into his hands and sets to work vigorously.*] Well, Doctor, where've you been runnin' about? Did you get as far as the Chinese? You gotta tell us all about that some day when we got plenty o' time for it.

DR. BOXER

Surely, I've been all over.

LANGHEINRICH

Did you see the sea-serpent too?

DR. BOXER

Surely, Langheinrich, far down in the South Seas.

LANGHEINRICH

An' it's true that it feeds on dill pickles?

DR. BOXER

Several hundred dozen a day.

LANGHEINRICH

[*Laughing.*] That's all right then. An' when you see that serpent again, just give her my best regards.

DR. BOXER

I doubt whether I'll ever get so far again in life.

LANGHEINRICH

I guess you got all you wanted o' that? Now you see, Doctor, you just got to the point where I am exactly an' I didn't have to move from this spot.— Well, I guess your old mother, she'll be glad. She's gettin' along all right. Doin' reel well. I always looked in a bit now an' then, helpin' to see that things was all right.

DR. BOXER

And that was very good in you, Langheinrich.

LANGHEINRICH

Naw! Pshaw! I ain't sayin' it on that account. By the way, though, before I forget. I got a little account standin' with your good mother — for taffeta an' silk an' needles an' thread. Some cloth, too. My wife used 'em sewing. I'll straighten that up very soon.

DR. BOXER

[*Deprecatingly.*] Never mind. That matter will be arranged.

LANGHEINRICH

Ede!

EDE

All right?

LANGHEINRICH

Hurry along now! [*He takes up a heavy hammer.*] If I don't go right on workin' I'll end by bustin' out o' my skin.

Ede *approaches with a white hot piece of iron in the tongs and holds it on the anvil.*

Langheinrich

Now we're goin' to start, Doctor! Down on it! Hit it now! [*He and* Dr. Boxer *beat the iron, keeping time with each other.*] Well, you see! It's got to go evenly, Doctor! Then I tell you the work's smooth as butter.

[*They stop hammering;* Ede *takes up the iron again, takes it into the smithy and holds it into the flame.*

Langheinrich

[*Takes up the water can again and sets it to his lips.*] There ain't much to this! [*Drinks.*

Ede

Things like that makes you thirsty.

Langheinrich *puts the can down.*

Langheinrich

You c'n believe me, Doctor: it was fine anyhow.

Dr. Boxer

What was it that was so very fine?

Langheinrich

Lord! I don't know! I don't know nothin' much. But when I met Constable Schulze I had a devil of a good time — that's what!

EDE

An' now a glass o' beer from Grabow over there. That's what I could stand fine just now.

LANGHEINRICH

Hurry! Get three steins! Dr. Boxer will pay for 'em.

EDE *wipes his hands on his apron and goes.*

LANGHEINRICH

An' so you want to settle down here now! That ain't no bad idea neither. Only this: you got to be up to all kinds o' tricks here. An' if you want my advice, Doctor, don't go to people for nothin'.

DR. BOXER

Do you think that I'll be unmolested in other respects?

LANGHEINRICH

Aw, them old stories! Them's all outlawed by now. An' then, nowadays they can't worry people so much no more as they used to do under the old laws.

DR. BOXER

Well, at all events I'll make the attempt . . . My political ardour has cooled off. If these people annoy me in spite of that, I'll simply trudge off again. I'll go back to sea, or I'll let myself be engaged . . .

LANGHEINRICH

Pretty easy drownin' on water!

DR. BOXER

[*Continuing.*] . . . Then I'll let myself be engaged to go to Brazil with the Russian Jews.

LANGHEINRICH

What would you get out o' that?

DR. BOXER

Yellow fever, perhaps.

LANGHEINRICH

Anything else, Doctor? That wouldn't be nothin' for me!

DR. BOXER

I believe that.

LANGHEINRICH

Me go an' wear myself out for other people? Not me! No, sir! I don't do nothin' like that. An' why should I? Nobody don't give me nothin'. I tell you people in this world is a pretty sly set. I've had time to find that out.

DR. BOXER

You're a regular heathen: you're not a Christian at all!

LANGHEINRICH

That kind o' talk don't do much good with me. I'm a Christian just like all the rest is! The people that sit in the new church here . . . 'cause they built a new church here now! . . . if them is Christians, the Lord forgive 'em.

DR. BOXER

That's easily said, Langheinrich. But one ought not to be a Pharisee. Where is your Christian long-suffering?

LANGHEINRICH

No, I ain't goin' in for long-sufferin'. I'm a sinner myself; that's true all right. But now you take this Dalchow here for instance! It'd take the devil to be long-sufferin' where *he's* concerned! What did he do with that son o' his. He kicked him out, that's what, by night, in winter. Then he tied him up and beat him till he couldn't gasp. An' then he apprenticed the little feller to a butcher so that he had to drive out the sheep! An' all the time jabbin' at him an' overworkin' him till in the end the poor little crittur went an' drowned hisself in the lake. Just shook his head an' kept still an' then dived down an' that was the end.

DR. BOXER

[*Ironically.*] I don't see what you've got against Dalchow, Langheinrich? He's a man who seems to understand his business magnificently.

LANGHEINRICH

Yes, ruinin' girls an' that sort o' thing, that's what. An' then beatin' his hat around their heads an' sayin': Out with the low strumpet! That's what they is all of a sudden when it's he that made 'em *what* they is! — Oh, an' then he's a great friend o' Wehrhahn's an' grunts out like a swine in public meetin's: There ain't no more morality these days . . . an' there ought to be laws against such doin's . . . an' so on, an' so on . . . an' if you'd like to go to church, there the old rotten sinner sits an' turns up his eyes. [*A distant ringing of church bells is heard.*] Listen to that! The sparrow is singin'.— I always calls that the sparrow, Doctor. I always says: the sparrow sings. I mean when them bells is ringin'. An' ain't I right that it's the sparrow that sings? 'Cause since Wehrhahn got that bird in his buttonhole them bells has begun to ring. An' if the bells didn't go an' ring, why he wouldn't have no decoration neither.

EDE *comes in grinning and carrying three steins of beer.*

EDE

Oho, listen there, the sparrow is singin'.

LANGHEINRICH

Well, you see, he don't call it nothin' else no more. [*Each of the three holds a stein. They knock them together.*] Your health! An' welcome back to the old country! [*They drink.*] That's a fine evenin' this mornin'. I'd like to see this night by day.

DR. BOXER

Now I'm goin' to blaspheme a bit. I'm not opposed to the building of churches at all.

LANGHEINRICH

An' I ain't neither. People gets work! I didn't get any this time, though. An' even if there's a little trouble now an' then, Pastor Friderici an' a bit o' nonsense with coloured windows an' altar cloths — that don't do no harm. People has to have a little.

DR. BOXER

Yes, those people are entitled to cultivate their own pleasures. And then, Langheinrich, a higher principle has to be represented somehow.

LANGHEINRICH

Sure, an' it brings people out here too, you c'n believe me. Buildin' lots has gone up considerable.

EDE

That's so. An' there was a man onct that didn't have no roof over his head . . . No, that ain't the way to begin what I want to say.— I was onct out on the heath — far out. All of a sudden: what d'you think I heard, Doctor! I heard a dickens of a screechin'.— I goes up to it. Crows! Yes, sir. There was a feller hangin' high up in a pine tree — tailor's journeyman from over in Berkenbruck: he hanged hisself on account o' starvation — hanged hisself high up.— Yes, there's always got to be somethin' higher!

[While they finish drinking their beer the long-drawn cries of pain of a man's voice are heard from some distance. The wind has risen considerably.

DR. BOXER

What is that?

EDE

Rauchhaupt. Nothin' to worry about.

LANGHEINRICH

Sounds kind o' gruesome, don't it? 'Tain't nothin' very lovely neither. When that feller's pains in his leg gets hold o' him an' he roars out that way o' nights — that goes right through an' through any one. No, before I'd stand pain like that I'd go an' put a bullet through my head.

EDE

Gee-rusalem! That's a wind again. Look out, Doctor, that your hat don't fly away.

A hat is whirled by the wind along the street. SCHMAROWSKI, *hatless, a roll of paper in his hand, runs chasing it.*

EDE

Run along, sonny! Right on there! Show us what you c'n do!

DR. BOXER

That hat is tired of his position: wants a holiday.

SCHMAROWSKI

[*Who has recovered his hat, turns angrily to* DR. BOXER.] What was that very appropriate remark you made just now?

DR. BOXER

That you are an excellent runner.

SCHMAROWSKI

Schmarowski!

DR. BOXER

Boxer!

SCHMAROWSKI

Much pleased.— Now I'd like to ask you a question. Do you know what a fathead is?

DR. BOXER

No.

SCHMAROWSKI

You don't? Neither do I. But now tell me: you know what a *schlemihl* is, I suppose.

LANGHEINRICH

Nothin' broke loose here? What's all this about? Easy now, easy! Howdy do, Mr. Schmarowski? How are you? Have you come to visit your mother-in-law?

SCHMAROWSKI

I have business here! — And before I forget it, I should like to say: Have the goodness to be more careful.

DR. BOXER

Who is this amusing gentleman, Langheinrich?

EDE

That's Mrs. Wolff's son-in-law.

SCHMAROWSKI

I'll have no dealings with you at all.

EDE

Naw, you better not.

SCHMAROWSKI

Not with you! — [*Turning to* DR. BOXER.] But if you don't know who I am, you can get information from Baron von Wehrhahn, the Right Reverend Bishop, the Baroness Bielschewski and the Countess Strach.

DR. BOXER

You want me to go around and get information from all those people?

SCHMAROWSKI

That's what you're to do — just that an' nothing else. Then maybe you can be more careful in future an' look people over before you talk.

LANGHEINRICH

What's gotten into you to-day? You're so dam' touchy!

SCHMAROWSKI

[*To* DR. BOXER, *who has glanced at* EDE *and* LANGHEINRICH *alternately with serene laughter.*] You just be so good an' be more careful: we ain't so soft. We don't take jokes so easy, especially not from the race to which you . . .

LANGHEINRICH

Hold on, Mr. Schmarowski! That's enough! Nothin' like that here. That's enough an' too much, Mr. Schmarowski. You just see about gettin' along on your way now.

SCHMAROWSKI

Do you know where I am going straight from here?

LANGHEINRICH

You c'n go straight ahead to the Lord hisself! You c'n go where you want to, Schmarowski; only, don't be keepin' me from my work. We ain't got no time to lose here! — Ede, put that axle in!

SCHMAROWSKI *exit, enraged.*

EDE

Good-bye!

Dr. Boxer

So that was Mr. Schmarowski, the envied pillar of the church? Why, he's a poisonous little devil!

Langheinrich

Yes, you're right there! Pois'nous is what he is. So you didn't know him, Dr. Boxer? Well, then you've seen him now — nothin' but a little, sly, venomous pup! But you ought to go an' watch him when he gets in with that pious crowd. Then he lets his ears hang, so 'umble his own mother wouldn't hardly know him, like as if he was sayin': I ain't goin' to live more'n two weeks at most an' then I'm goin' to heaven to be with Jesus. Yes! 'Likely! There's another place where he's goin'. But that won't be soon. He ain't thinkin' of it much yet. An' in the meantime he rolls his eyes upward 'cause somethin' might be hangin' round that he c'n make a profit on.

Ede

Well, you c'n look out now! You ain't goin' to get no work on the new institution.

Langheinrich

I know that. Can't be helped. Things is as they is. Can't hold my tongue at things like that. I won't learn that in a lifetime.

Dr. Boxer

Have you many of that kind hereabouts now?

LANGHEINRICH

So, so. Enough to last for the winter.

RAUCHHAUPT *has come out of the little gate. He faces the wind, shades his eyes with his hand and peers around.*

RAUCHHAUPT

Lord A'mighty! Well, well! Things is goin' the queerest way to-day! When is they comin' back — them Fielitzes?

LANGHEINRICH

That ain't goin' to be so very soon to-day. They've gone to buy a seven-day clock, a regulator. What are you upset about to-day?

RAUCHHAUPT

Wha'? Fielitz goin' to buy that kind of a clock? I don't believe 's he c'n survive that. [*Calls.*] Gustav!

LANGHEINRICH

Ain't he come back yet? I guess he's listenin' to the bells. You know how he sits an' listens when they ring.

RAUCHHAUPT

I don't know. Things is goin' queer to-day. Mrs. Fielitz sent for him to come over. Horse-radish seed is what she said she wanted. An' then she goes an' leaves for the city.

[*Exit, shaking his head.*

Ede

They been stalkin' about since four o'clock in the mornin'. Up an' down they went with their bull's-eye lantern. I don't believe they went to bed at all.

Langheinrich

Well, if Fielitz has gone to buy a clock you can't expect him to eat or drink or sleep.

Rauchhaupt

[*Behind the fence.*] Gustav!

Dr. Boxer

The boy is coming now, running along.

Langheinrich

That's right. Rauchhaupt! Here's Gustav!

Gustav *comes prancing up, highly excited, gesticulating violently. He points in the direction from which he has come.*

Ede

Is that there a war dance you're tryin' to perform? Looks like the cannibals' goin's on. I believe that brat feeds on human flesh.

Langheinrich

Hurry now an' run to your father.

Ede

Go on now!

LANGHEINRICH

Get along with your horse-radish.

GUSTAV *gesticulating, puts his hollow hand to his mouth and toots in imitation of a trumpet. Laughter.*

EDE

Where's the fire, you little firebrand?

LANGHEINRICH

Ede, catch hold o' him!

EDE

All right. [*He tries to creep up to* GUSTAV. *The latter observes this, gives a loud toot and, still tooting, hurries away, dropping a box of matches as he does so.*] Hallo!

LANGHEINRICH

What's that?

EDE

Just what I need.

LANGHEINRICH

What?

EDE

Safetys! A whole box full.

MRS. SCHULZE *comes rushing down the stairs.*

MRS. SCHULZE

Mr. Langheinrich!

LANGHEINRICH

Well, what?

MRS. SCHULZE

Mr. Langheinrich!

LANGHEINRICH

Here I is!

MRS. SCHULZE

It's . . . it's . . . it's . . . over at . . .

LANGHEINRICH

Anything about the missis?

MRS. SCHULZE

No, at Fielitzes'.

LANGHEINRICH

Is that so? Nothin' about my wife? Well, then,— [*he shakes her*] — just stop to get your breath. Things is as they is. I'm prepared for anythin'— life an' death. I gotta stand it.

MRS. SCHULZE

The engine!

LANGHEINRICH

What kind o' talk is that? Anythin' wrong with you?

MRS. SCHULZE

No; it's burnin'!

LANGHEINRICH

Go an' blow it out then! — Where is it burnin'!

MRS. SCHULZE

At the Fielitzes'!

LANGHEINRICH

Good Lord! That ain't possible!

[*He drops the iron file and some nails which he has been holding.*

EDE

Where's the fire?

MRS. SCHULZE

At Fielitzes'; the flame is comin' out o' the skylight.

DR. BOXER

[*Has stepped forward.*] Confound it all, but it's smoky! Come here! You can see it well from here.

EDE

[*Also stares in the direction of the fire. His expression shows that a complete understanding of the situation has come to him, which he expresses by a conscious whistling.*] There ain't no words for this; I just gotta whistle.

LANGHEINRICH

Ede! Run over to Scheibler's! Run! Get the horses for the engine! That smoke's comin' up thick over the gable.

[*He rushes into the smithy, throws his apron aside, puts on a fireman's helmet, belt, etc.*

Mrs. Schulze

An' nobody at home there, goodness gracious!

Dr. Boxer

That's the lucky part of it, after all.

The roaring of the fire alarm trumpet is heard.

Mrs. Schulze

You hear, Doctor? They're tootin' already!

Langheinrich

[*Reappears in his fireman's uniform.*] You get out o' the way here, old lady. Go an' attend to things upstairs. Nothin' to be done here with a syringe. You go up to my wife. Hold on! We gotta have the key to the engine house. The devil!

Mrs. Schulze *withdraws into the house.* Rauchhaupt's *head reappears on the other side of the fence.*

Rauchhaupt

My, but there's a smell o' burnin' in the air.

Langheinrich

Sure it smells that way. There's a fire at the Fielitzes'.

RAUCHHAUPT

The devil! I didn't know nothin' about that!

LANGHEINRICH

That's all right, old man. Wasn't you a constable onct? [*He rushes away.*

A fourteen-year-old boy comes madly hurrying up.

THE BOY

[*To* DR. BOXER.] Master! The key to the engine house! They can't get in to the engine.

DR. BOXER

I'm not the fireman! Just keep cool!

THE BOY

They wants you to come to the engine right off.

DR. BOXER

You didn't hear what I told you.

THE BOY

There's a fire!

DR. BOXER

I know that. The engine master has left. He's reached the engine long ago.

THE BOY

There's a fire. They wants you to come down to the engine! [*He runs away.*

Rauchhaupt *appears at the gate.* Two Little Girls *cling to his rags.*

Rauchhaupt

I'm used to that! It don't excite me a bit! Mieze! Lottie! You c'n come an' see somethin'. — I seen hundreds an' hundreds o' fires.

Dr. Boxer

[*Takes off the leathern apron.*] It's a very sad thing for those people, though!

Rauchhaupt

Everythin' is sad in this here world. It's all a question o' how you looks at it! The same thing that's sad c'n be mighty cheerin'. Now there's me: I raises pineapples, an' my hothouse wall . . . it's right up against Fielitzes' back wall. Now I won't have to keep no fire goin' for three days.

A somewhat Older Girl *also comes out through the gate and nestles close up to the others.* Mrs. Schulze *leans out from the window in the gable.*

Mrs. Schulze

[*Addressing someone in the room behind her.*] Missis, you c'n be reel quiet! The wind's blowin' from the other side. [*She disappears.*

Rauchhaupt

Did you see that there old witch? She always knows where the wind comes from.— I retired

from all that, yessir! I didn't want to be a old bloodhound right along. I don't mix in them things no more. But that woman — she could be a keen one. [*A fireman, blowing his horn very excitedly, walks by.*] Go it easy, August! Patience! Look out, or your breeches will bust!

THE FIREMAN

[*Enraged.*] Aw, shut up! Go an' hide yourself in the holes you're always diggin'. [*Exit.*

A FOURTH *and a* FIFTH GIRL, *aged nine and ten years respectively, join the old man.*

DR. BOXER

[*Laughing.*] That's quite a fierce fellow.

RAUCHHAUPT

Gussie, Nelly, gimme your hand.— That's all nothin' but hurry. That feller don't know what's goin' on in this world. He's blowin' the trumpet of Jericho, I'm thinkin', or maybe even the trump o' Judgment Day!

DR. BOXER

I don't think I quite take your meaning, Mr. Rauchhaupt.

RAUCHHAUPT

Maybe Mrs. Wolff was only tryin' to scorch roaches. All right. Maybe, for all I care, 'twas somethin' else. But if Mrs. Wolff ever puts *her* hand to somethin'— there ain't very much left.

DR. BOXER

What do you mean by that?

RAUCHHAUPT

Oh, I was just thinkin'.

[*He withdraws, together with the children.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE THIRD ACT

The court-room of Justice von Wehrhahn. *A large, white-washed room level with the ground. The main door is in the left wall. Along the wall to the right is the large official table covered with books, documents, etc. Behind it stands the chair of the justice. By the middle window, small table and chair for the clerk of the court. In the foreground, right, a book case of soft wood, and on the left wall, shelves for documents and records. A small door in the background. Several chairs.*

Glasenapp *sits at his small table. The* Justice's *chair is unoccupied.*

In front of the official table Dr. Boxer, Langheinrich *in his uniform of a captain of the fire brigade,* Ede *and* Three Firemen *are waiting. They are engaged in a rather excited conversation. All are red with heat, stained with mud, wet and sooty.*

Mrs. Schulze, *somewhat pale, is resting in a chair and waiting likewise. She is in a very thoughtful mood. Repeatedly she takes off her headkerchief and puts it on again and arranges her grey hair.*

The action takes place on the same day as that of the first act, five hours later.

The conversation suddenly ceases.

Justice von Wehrhahn *enters betraying a high degree of official zeal. He covers his left eye with his left hand as though in pain, sits down behind the table, takes his hand from his eye, which twitches painfully, and begins.*

Wehrhahn

Well, what's the result of this wretched mess?

Langheinrich

[*Noticeably stimulated by exertion, whiskey and beer.*] I've come to announce, Baron, that the whole business is burned down.

Wehrhahn

[*Throwing down on the table an object which he has brought with him. It is seen to be a photograph in a frame of deer feet.*] That's because you're all only half awake! You're all made that way. You drowse around and do nothing. We're not three miles distant from Berlin; our entire activity should have a different air!

Ede

[*Softly to* Dr. Boxer.] The fire did have air enough, eh?

Langheinrich

Your honour . . .

WEHRHAHN

Never mind. I know all about it.

[*He pulls out his handkerchief, wipes the perspiration from his forehead and taps his eye.*

LANGHEINRICH

Your honour, I'd like to lay claim, humbly, to some credit . . . We did our part honestly. We was on the spot with the engine.

WEHRHAHN

Then get a better engine!

LANGHEINRICH

But if you can't get no water!

WEHRHAHN

You managed to get plenty of beer.

LANGHEINRICH

————?

EDE

Puttin' out a fire makes you thirsty!

WEHRHAHN

That seems undoubtedly to have been the case. — Glasenapp, will you come and look? Something flew into my eye. [GLASENAPP *jumps up and investigates.*] I had just examined Mrs. Schulze when the north gable caved in. It must have been a spark or something like that.— By the way, hasn't Mrs. Schulze been here?

MRS. SCHULZE

Here I is.

GLASENAPP

Yes, Baron.

WEHRHAHN *motions him away.* GLASENAPP *steps back and goes over to his table.*

WEHRHAHN

To proceed, then. It has come to my ears . . . Mrs. Schulze has informed me, that a certain incident took place in front of your smithy.— It seems that you saw that worthless boy immediately before the flame rose and that he had a box of matches. How is it now with this story of the matches? Tell us what you know!

LANGHEINRICH

He had a box o' matches. That's so.

WEHRHAHN

And he let it fall.

EDE

An' I picked it up. Yessir.

WEHRHAHN

You?

EDE

Me. Same person you see. Here's the box. All the matches ain't there no more 'cause I smoked several times . . .

[*He places the box of matches on the official table.*

Wehrhahn

[*Unpleasantly impressed by* Ede's *manner, takes up the box and fixes his eyes upon him.*] You helped along vigorously, I suppose?

Ede

You bet! 'Tain't no fun otherwise.

Wehrhahn

I meant especially in the consumption of beer.

Ede

That's what I thought you meant. Yessir!

Wehrhahn

You seem to be in a very playful mood.

Ede

Merry an' larky — that's my motto, your honour!

Wehrhahn

Delighted to hear that, I must say.— Look here, are you Dr. Boxer?

Dr. Boxer

Quite right. Dr. Boxer.

WEHRHAHN

So you are he! Aha! I would hardly have recognised you. Your mother still has the little notion shop here . . . Your father was a —er — tradesman —?

DR. BOXER

[*Voluntarily misunderstanding him.*] Yes, my father was in the reserve forces and was decorated with the Iron Cross in 1870.

WEHRHAHN

Ah, yes. Of course. I recall.— Your mother came running to my office recently and brought along several stones. Her kitchen windows had been broken, I believe. Mischievous boys, no doubt. I investigated, of course. I'm told you want to settle down here? — There's a very good physician here now — formerly of the army staff — very capable.

DR. BOXER

I don't doubt that for a moment.

WEHRHAHN

To be quite frank — as things are now — I wonder whether this is an appropriate territory for you?

DR. BOXER

I can take some time to discover that.

WEHRHAHN

Naturally. So can we. So continue, please.— What was it that you observed, Dr. Boxer?

DR. BOXER

The incident of the matches certainly.

WEHRHAHN

The incident of the horn blowing and of the matches.

DR. BOXER

Certainly.

WEHRHAHN

Where were you when all this took place?

DR. BOXER

I stood in front of Langheinrich's smithy.

WEHRHAHN

Did you have any particular business there? — You needn't get impatient at all. I understand that it doesn't concern me at present. Your sympathetic affinity for the working classes is known to us from of old.— The boy will be arrested now. I imagine that Constable Tschache has captured him. At all events — is on his trail. He was seen in Rahnsdorf too. Please call in Sadowa!

[GLASENAPP *withdraws by the rear door.*

Dr. Boxer

Am I dismissed now, your honour?

Wehrhahn

Extremely sorry; no. Kindly wait.— Mrs. Schulze, where is your nephew keeping himself today? I haven't seen him all day long. Does any one know where Constable Schulze is?

Ede

[*Softly.*] He might send out a warrant after him.

Wehrhahn

Doesn't any one know where Constable Schulze is? — Has any one interviewed Mrs. Fielitz? Or hasn't she returned from Berlin yet? — I want somebody to go to Councillor Reinberg.— [*To* Glasenapp, *who is just returning.*] Mr. Schmarowski, Mrs. Fielitz's son-in-law, is there submitting his building-plans. The news should be broken to him gently.

Ede

[*Softly to* Boxer *and* Langheinrich.] Yes, gently, so he don't stumble over the church steeple.

[Dr. Boxer *and* Langheinrich *restrain their laughter with difficulty.*

Wehrhahn

[*Observing this.*] Does that strike you as very amusing? — I don't know what other reason you should have to laugh, Langheinrich. When peo-

ple are hardworking and ambitious and a fright like this comes to them — a visitation from God — we might properly say: God protect us from such things! I see nothing to laugh at.— Did you have the impression . . . did the boy seem to you . . . I mean, in reference to this affair — as if things were not quite right with him?

EDE

[*Softly to* BOXER *and* LANGHEINRICH.] We knows where he ain't quite right!

WEHRHAHN

Did he arouse your suspicion? Yes or no? Or did the thought actually occur to you that he might have started the fire?

DR. BOXER

No. I have become too much of a stranger here. The conditions seem to overwhelm me.

WEHRHAHN

In what respect?

DR. BOXER

[*With assumed seriousness.*] I have returned from a very narrow life. Out on the ocean one becomes accustomed to a certain narrowness of outlook. And so, as I said, I hardly feel capable of any comment for the present and must ask for the necessary consideration.

Wehrhahn

We're not discussing conditions. The thing that lies before us is a concrete case. For instance: whether the boy tootled or not — what has that to do with narrowness or breadth of outlook?

Dr. Boxer

Quite right. I haven't been able to get a general view yet. I can't so suddenly find my way again. I feel, naturally, the importance, the seriousness of the conditions here at home and that makes me feel hesitant.

Wehrhahn

He did tootle this way, through his hand, didn't he? You heard that too, didn't you, Langheinrich?

Langheinrich

Sure, he did it right out loud.

Ede

When a feller tootles so tootin'ly that you c'n rightly say he's tootlin', then you c'n hear that there tootlin' tootin'ly.

Wehrhahn

[*To* Langheinrich.] Did you observe anything else that aroused your suspicions? I mean, while you were extinguishing the fire? Were there any indications that pointed in another direction, or that might, at least, point in another direction? [Langheinrich *thinks for a moment, then shakes*

his head.] You didn't get inside of the house, did you?

LANGHEINRICH

I just barely glanced into the room. Then the ceiling came crashin' down. A hair's breadth sooner an' I'd ha' been smothered.

WEHRHAHN

The fire was started from without. Constable Tschache is quite right in that supposition. Probably from behind where the goatshed is. That would also be in agreement with your evidence, Mrs. Schulze! You saw him creep around the house. Right above the goatshed there is a window from which, as a rule, straw was sticking out. I myself made that observation. And this window gives on Rauchhaupt's garden. This window tempted the boy. It tempted him because he had it daily before his eyes. So he simply climbed on the roof of the shed and from there reached the sky-light. Very pleasant neighbour to have — I must say! — Who's that crossing the street and howling so?

GLASENAPP

[*Looks through the window.*] Shoemaker Fielitz and his wife.

WEHRHAHN

What? Is that Mrs. Fielitz who comes howling so? It's enough to melt the heart of a stone.

MRS. FIELITZ, *whose loud, convulsive weeping has been audible before she appeared, enters,*

leaning upon the Sexton *and followed by* Her Husband, *who carries a large, new clock carefully in his arms.* Fielitz *and* His Wife *are both in their Sunday clothes.*

Wehrhahn

Well, heavens and earth, Mrs. Fielitz! Trust in the Lord! Our trust in the Lord — that's the main thing! This isn't a killing matter.— Get a drink of brandy, Nickel! Go over and ask my wife for it. Mrs. Fielitz has got to be brought to her senses first.— Do me a favour, Mrs. Fielitz, and stop your outburst of tears. I can feel for you, when it comes to that. Quite a severe blow of fate. Have any valuables been destroyed? [Mrs. Fielitz *weeps more violently.*] Mrs. Fielitz! Mrs. Fielitz! Listen to me! Please listen to what I say to you! Kindly don't lose your reason! D'you understand? Don't lose your head! You're generally a sensible woman.— Well, if you won't, you won't.— [Nickel, *who has been gone for a moment, returns with a brandy bottle and a small glass.*] — Give her the brandy; quick. — I'll address myself to you, Fielitz. I see that you're quite collected, at least. That's the way a man ought to be, you understand. In any situation — be that what it may. So, Fielitz, you give me some information! I'll put the same question to you first: Have any valuables been destroyed?

Fielitz

[*He is only partially successful in restraining the convulsive sobs that attack him while he speaks.*] Yes. Six bills . . . banknotes!

WEHRHAHN

Well, I'll be blessed! Is that true? And, of course, you don't even know the numbers! My gracious, but you're careless people! One ought to think of such things! But that does no good now. Fielitz, do you hear me! One ought to take some thought.— Now he's beginning to howl too! Do you understand me? The place for ready money is a bank! And anyhow — the whole business! One doesn't leave one's property alone like that! One shouldn't leave it quite unprotected, especially with such a crowd in the neighbourhood as we have here!

FIELITZ

I . . . aw . . . who'd ha' thought o' such a thing, your honour?

WEHRHAHN

Why don't you lay that clock down?

FIELITZ

I'm a peaceable man, your honour. I — I — I — I — Oh, Lordy, Lordy! I can't tell you nothin', how that there thing happened.— I'm on good terms with people; I don't quarrel with nobody . . . I has made mistakes in my life. That happens when a man ain't got no good companions. But that people should go an' treat me this way! No, I ain't never deserved that.

MRS. FIELITZ

[*Weeping.*] Fielitz, what has I always been tellin' you? Who's right now, eh? Tell me that:

who's right now? You didn't make no enemies on *our* account. Them's very different stories — them is. An' I guess Mr. von Wehrhahn knows somethin' about that!

FIELITZ

Aw, mother, keep still. That there, that was my dooty.

[EDE, *half seriously, half in jest, makes a threatening gesture behind* FIELITZ. WEHRHAHN *observes this.*

WEHRHAHN

Look here, you there! What's that you did? You stood behind Fielitz and shook your fist over his head.

EDE

Maybe I'm weak in the chest, but I don't rightly know.

WEHRHAHN

Listen: I'll tell you something. The place for insane people is the asylum. But if you behave with any more impudence, you'll first be taken to gaol! — I didn't understand you quite rightly, Mrs. Fielitz. You insinuated something just now. Have you any suspicions in that direction? I don't care to express myself more clearly. But do you suspect a — how shall I express it — an act of, so to speak, political reprisal? In that case you must be absolutely open. We shall then certainly get to the bottom of it.

Mrs. Fielitz

No, no, no! I ain't got no suspicion. I'd rather go an' beg on the public roads. I don't want to accuse no human being. I don't know. I can't make nothin' of it at all. That's what I says again an' again. I don't know nothin'.— Everythin' was locked up. We went away. The kitchen fire was out; the top o' the oven was cold. Well, how did it happen? I can't understand it, nohow. I don't know. But you see, that a feller like that there feller c'n sit here an' make insinerations — that does hurt a body right to the soul!

Wehrhahn

Don't permit that to make any impression on you! Where would any of us be, if we let such things affect us? Any one who goes to church nowadays has the whole world hooting him. You just stick to me. [*He rummages among the papers on his table.*] By the way, I succeeded in saving something here — a picture of your late husband. At least, I believe that that's what it is. It was framed in deer's feet. [*He finds the picture and hands it to* Mrs. Fielitz.] Here!

Mrs. Fielitz *takes the picture, grasps* Wehrhahn's *hand with a swift motion and kisses it, weeping.*

Ede

[*Audibly.*] Has anybody maybe got a bit o' sponge in his pocket, 'cause, you see, stockin's don't absorb so much water.

WEHRHAHN

Make a note of that fellow, Glasenapp! Out with him! At once! You are to withdraw!

EDE *withdraws with absurd gestures of his arms and legs. Suppressed laughter.*

WEHRHAHN

I'm really very much surprised at you, Langheinrich. That fellow has a regular felon's face. One of those knife ruffians; a regular socialist. He's been in gaol several times on account of street brawls. And that's the kind of a man that you take into your shop and home.

LANGHEINRICH

All that don't concern me, your honour. I don't mix in politics.

WEHRHAHN

Oh, is that so? We can afford to wait and see.

LANGHEINRICH

If a feller goes an' does his work all right . . .

WEHRHAHN

Nonsense! Mere twaddle! Let any one tell me with whom he associates and I will tell him who he is.

The murmuring and chattering of a crowd is heard. Constable SCHULZE *enters in full uniform.*

WEHRHAHN

Where have you been all day?

SCHULZE

[*Utterly disconcerted for some moments. Then:*] We nabbed the boy, your honour.

WEHRHAHN

Is that so? Who did it?

SCHULZE

Me and Tschache.

WEHRHAHN

Where?

SCHULZE

Right near here, by the church.

GLASENAPP

He always sits there and listens to the bells.

WEHRHAHN

Why didn't you tell us that before? Did he try to escape? Did he run from you?

SCHULZE

He sat in the ditch an' didn't notice us. Tschache could ride close up to him. An' then we got him by the scruff an' had him tight.

[*He steps back and grasps* GUSTAV, *whom* TSCHACHE *is leading in. Members of the crowd press forward.*

WEHRHAHN

H-m! At all events he is here. I'm rather sorry, I must say. He's the son of a former Prussian constable . . . Has any one informed old Rauchhaupt? Somebody had better go for him.

MRS. SCHULZE

I'm takin' care of a sick person, your honour. Maybe I might be able to get off now?

WEHRHAHN

Prepare the record, Glasenapp. No, Mrs. Schulze, you'll have to remain here for the present. The matter will be finished soon enough.— So let us prepare the record . . .

[*He leans back in his chair and stares at the ceiling as if collecting his thoughts for the purpose of dictating.*

LANGHEINRICH

[*Softly to* DR. BOXER.] Look at Mrs. Fielitz, will you, Doctor? Eh? Ain't she grown yellow as a lemon peel? — If only that thing don't go crooked, I tell you. [*He shows to* DR. BOXER, *who wards him off with a gesture, something secretly in his hollow hand.*] D'you want to see somethin'? Eh? That's a fuse, that's what.

DR. BOXER

[*Softly.*] Where did you get that from?

LANGHEINRICH

It ain't me that knows! That might come from anywhere in the world. It might even come from Fielitz's cellar. Yessir. Maybe you don't believe that? An' if I wanted to be nasty, Doctor . . .

WEHRHAHN

Private conversation is not permitted here.

MRS. FIELITZ

[*Tugs at* LANGHEINRICH'S *sleeve and asks softly:*] Didn't you meet Leontine to-day? Where was it?

LANGHEINRICH

[*With a triumphant glance at* SCHULZE.] Over in Woltersdorf.

WEHRHAHN

Well, then, Glasenapp . . . This is a horrible state of affairs — the seventh conflagration this Autumn. And these people pretend to constitute a civilised society! These firebrands pretend to be Christians. One need merely step out on one's balcony to see the reflection of a fire somewhere in the heavens. Now and then in clear nights I have counted the reflections of as many as five. Contempt of judges and laws — that's what it is! And that has taken such hold of these scoundrels that arson has become a kind of diversion.— But they had better go slow. Just a little patience, ladies and gentlemen! We know the tracks! We are on the right scent! And the people in

question will have a terrible awakening when, quite suddenly, discovery and retribution come upon them. Any one who is at all versed in the procedure of criminal justice knows that it goes ahead slowly and surely and finally lays hold upon the guilty.— But as Commissioner von Stoeckel quite rightly observed: 'The whole moral downfall of our time, its actual return to savagery is a consequence of the lack of religion! Educated people do not hesitate to undermine the divine foundations upon which the structure of salvation rests.— But, thank God, we're always to be found at our place! We are, so to speak, always on our watch-tower! — And, I tell you, boy: There is a God! Do you understand? There is a God in Heaven from whom no evil deed remains hidden. Brotherly love! Christian spirit! What your kind needs is to have your breeches drawn tight and your behind flogged! I'd make you sick of playing with fires, you infamous little scamp! — Yes, Dr. Boxer, that is exactly my conviction. You can shrug your shoulders all you please; that doesn't disturb me in the slightest degree. You can even take up your pen and raise the cry of cruelty and unfeelingness in the public prints! Flogging! Christian discipline — that's what is needed, and no sentimental slopping around! You understand!

GUSTAV

[*Has become more and more excited by the rising enthusiasm of the speaker. At the end of* WEHRHAHN'S *oratorical effort he can restrain himself no longer and breaks out in a loud, de-*

ceptively exact imitation of an ass's bray.] I! a! a! a! I! a! a! a! [*General embarrassment.*

WEHRHAHN

[*Also embarrassed.*] What does that mean?

GLASENAPP

I really don't know.

LANGHEINRICH

That's Gustav's art, your honour. He's famous for imitatin' animals' voices.

WEHRHAHN

Is that so? And what animal was this supposed to be?

LANGHEINRICH

I guess a lion, all right.— [*General laughter.*

WEHRHAHN *shrugs his shoulders, laughs jeeringly and goes to his seat. Silence. Then renewed laughter.*

WEHRHAHN

I must request silence. This is no place for laughter! We are not indulging in horse-play for your benefit. We are not trying to amuse any one. The things we are discussing here are of a deadly seriousness. This isn't a circus.

RAUCHHAUPT *enters and stares helplessly about him.*

MRS. FIELITZ

[*Tugs at the coat of* SCHULZE, *who stands near her but with his back turned. He faces her and she asks with a sorrowful expression.*] Did you see my girl to-day?

SCHULZE *nods and turns back again.*

MRS. FIELITZ

[*As before.*] You did see Leontine this morning?

SCHULZE *nods again and turns away.*

MRS. FIELITZ

[*Repeating the action.*] An' where did you meet her, Constable?

SCHULZE

[*Almost without moving his lips.*] It was over beyond Woltersdorf.

RAUCHHAUPT

[*To* LANGHEINRICH.] What's the matter here? What's all this here about?

WEHRHAHN

[*Observes* RAUCHHAUPT.] You are a retired Prussian constable?

RAUCHHAUPT

[*Having failed to hear the question.*] Say, Schulze, what's all this for?

SCHULZE

His honour axed you somethin'. I can't go an' give you no information. That's against orders. If you'd only ha' kept a better watch on that there boy! I preached to you about that often enough.

RAUCHHAUPT

I don't know what you been preachin'! You ol' mush head! Go on preachin'!

SCHULZE

I begs to have it recorded that Rauchhaupt insulted me officially.

RAUCHHAUPT

What? 'Cause you're such a old idjit? That's the reason why I insults you officially. . . .

WEHRHAHN

Man alive! Do you know where you are? Or have you just dropped here out of the clouds! Confound it all! Stand still! Obey orders!

RAUCHHAUPT

Here I is, your honour, an' I humbly announces . . .

WEHRHAHN

That you are recalcitrant and disorderly! You are trying to get into trouble! How long have you been retired?

RAUCHHAUPT

Eleven years.

WEHRHAHN

In addition your memory is probably injured. And anyhow — your whole appearance! The devil! To think of a former constable looking like that . . . I thought I knew all types!

RAUCHHAUPT

That's 'cause I am . . . You'll kindly excuse . . .

WEHRHAHN

Nothing is excused here! D'you understand? You actually smell! You contaminate the air!

RAUCHHAUPT

'Tain't nothin' but the smell o' earth . . .

WEHRHAHN

Horse dung!

RAUCHHAUPT

That must be from them pineapples.—

[*Laughter.*

WEHRHAHN

In short: make haste to get out as soon as possible; otherwise, as I said . . . Out! Out! You have probably seen now what is taking place here, and now you have nothing further to do.— Here

are the papers, Constable! Take them right over to the court.

[*He hands the papers to* Schulze. *The officers clash their sabres, grasp* Gustav *more firmly and prepare to lead him out.* Rauchhaupt *glares about in helpless and growing terror.*

Dr. Boxer

I have the impression, your honour, that this boy is really a patient. You will forgive me for mingling . . .

Langheinrich

The boy's a imbecile — clean daft!

Mrs. Schulze

No, no, Doctor! Oh, no, Mr. Langheinrich, that there boy knows what he's doin'. I had a hen onct an' she went an' hatched out eleven little chicks and he goes an' takes bricks an' kills seven of 'em.

Schulze

That's right, aunt. An' how about that other business, about the little purse what he stole?

Mrs. Schulze

The little purse, yes, an' what was in it. An' the way he went about that there thing . . . nobody as is well could ha' done it more clever.

Schulze

An' then, aunt, the shawl . . .

Mrs. Schulze

Naw, an' then that there pistol. That boy's got all the good sense he needs. I'm a old an' experienced woman.

Rauchhaupt

What's that you is? What? A ole witch with a low, lousy tongue in her head! You go an' sweep in front o' your own door before you go an' accuse other people. If somebody was to go an' watch your trade — takin' care o' babies an' such like an' seein' to it that there ain't no shortage o' angels in heaven — all kinds o' things might come out an' you wouldn't know how to see or hear no more.— What's this? What's the matter with Gustav? I gotta know that — what all this here is!

Wehrhahn

Hold your tongue! [*To the constable.*] Right about — march!

Rauchhaupt

Hold on, I says! Hold on, now! That's no way! Things like that ain't mentioned in Scripter! I'm the father o' this here child! What's he done? What do people think he's done? Gustav! What is they accusin' you of? I went through the Schleswig-Holstein campaign; I was under fire in 'sixty-six; I was wounded in 'seventy. Here's my leg an' here is my scars. I served the King of Prussia . . .

WEHRHAHN

Those are old stories that you're telling us.

RAUCHHAUPT

. . . With God for King and Fatherland! But this thing here, no, sir; I can't allow that. I wants to know what this thing here with Gustav is about!

WEHRHAHN

Look here, my man, you had better come to your senses! I have told you that once before. In consideration of your service to the state I have overlooked several things as it is. Well now, I'll do one thing more. Listen to me! This fine little product — this son of yours, has committed arson. At least, he is under the very strongest suspicion. Now step out of the way and don't interfere with the officers in the performance of their duty. Go on, Schulze!

RAUCHHAUPT

Committed arson? That there boy? Over there? At Fielitz's? Gustav? This here boy? This here little feller? O Lordy! But that makes me laugh! An' that they ain't all laughin' — that's the funny part. Here, Schulze, don't you go in for no foolishness! I wore them brass buttons myself once! — Howdy-do, Mrs. Fielitz! Well, Fielitz, how are you? Where are you goin' to hang up that clock o' yours?

MRS. FIELITZ

Now he's jeerin' at us atop o' our troubles.

RAUCHHAUPT

Not a bit. Why should I be jeerin' at you anyhow? It's a misfortune, you think! Lord, Lord, so it is! Cats die around in sheds an' the birds they falls down dead to the earth. No, I ain't jeerin' at you! Anyhow: I ain't scared o' many things. I've gone for some tough customers in my time — fellers that none o' the other constables wanted to tackle! This here finger is bitten through. Yessir! But before I tackles any one like you — I'll go an' hang myself.

MRS. FIELITZ

[*Almost grey in the face, with trembling lips, yet with considerable vehemence and energy.*] What's that man goin' for me like that for? What did I ever do to him, I'd like to know! Can I help it that things has turned out this way? I ain't seen nothin'! I wasn't there! I ain't cast no suspicions on no one! An' if they went an' arrested that boy o' yours — I didn't know no more about that than you!

RAUCHHAUPT

Woman! Woman! Look at me!

MRS. FIELITZ

Rot! Stop botherin' me. Leave me in peace an' don't go showin' off that way! I got enough trouble to go through. The doctor tells a person not to get excited, 'cause you might go just like that! An' a man like you . . . We don't know where to lie down! We don't know where we're

goin' to sleep to-night! We're lyin' in the street, you might say, half dead an' all broken up . . .

RAUCHHAUPT

Woman! Woman! Can you look at me?

MRS. FIELITZ

Leave me alone an' go where you belongs. I don't let nobody treat me like that! I c'n look at you all right! Why not? I c'n look at you three days an' three nights an' see nothin' but a donkey before me! If this here thing is put off on your boy now, whose fault is it mostly? How did you go an' talk about the boy? You says, says you: he steals, he sets fire to your straw shed — an' now you're surprised that things turns out this way! You beat this here poor boy . . . he used to come runnin' over to me with so many blue spots on his body that there wasn't a place on him that wasn't sore. An' now you acts all of a sudden like a crazy man!

WEHRHAHN *has motioned the officers who grasp* GUSTAV *more firmly and lead him toward the door.* RAUCHHAUPT *observes this and jumps with lightning-like rapidity in front of* GUSTAV, *placing his hands on the latter's shoulders and holding him fast.*

RAUCHHAUPT

Can't be done! I can't allow that, your honour. My Gustav ain't no criminal! I lived along reel quiet all to myself an' now I got into this here conspiracy. There's got to be proofs first of

all! [*To* Langheinrich.] Could it ha' been he, d'you think? [Langheinrich *shrugs his shoulders.*] Them's all a crowd o' thieves around here — that's what . . . Gustav, don't you cry! They can't, in God's name — they can't do nothin' to you . . .

Wehrhahn

Hands off! Or . . . Hands off!

Rauchhaupt

Your honour, I'll take my oath o' office, that's what I'll take, that my boy here is innercent!

Wehrhahn

Tempi passati. You're getting yourself into trouble. For the last time: Hands off!

Rauchhaupt

Then I'd rather kill him right here on the spot, your honour!

Wehrhahn

[*Steps between and separates* Rauchhaupt *from his son.*] Move on! You're not to touch the boy! If you dare the constable will draw his sabre!

Rauchhaupt

[*White as chalk, half maddened with excitement, has loosened his hold on* Gustav *and plants himself in front of the main door.*] Don't do that to me, your honour, for God's sake, for Christ's

sake — don't! That's a point o' honour with me — a point o' honour! Anythin' exceptin' that! I'll go instead. I c'n furnish bail. I'll run an' get bail. I c'n get back here right away! Eh? C'n I? Or can't that be done now?

WEHRHAHN

Stuff and nonsense. Move out of the way!

RAUCHHAUPT

I knows who it was that did it!

WEHRHAHN *thrusts* RAUCHHAUPT *aside and the two officers conduct* GUSTAV *out.* DR. BOXER *and* LANGHEINRICH *support and restrain* RAUCHHAUPT *at the same time. He falls into a state of dull collapse. Silence ensues. Without saying a word* WEHRHAHN *returns to his table, blows his nose, glances swiftly at* RAUCHHAUPT *and* MRS. FIELITZ *and sits down.*

WEHRHAHN

Let us have some light, Glasenapp.

GLASENAPP *lights a lamp on the table.*

MRS. FIELITZ

No, no, I tell you; it's bad, bad! A man like that! He goes an' accuses everybody in the whole place.

WEHRHAHN

You! Mrs. Schulze! You can go your ways!

MRS. SCHULZE *withdraws rapidly.*

MRS. FIELITZ

I'd like to ax your honour . . . we don't even know where we're goin' to sleep to-night.

WEHRHAHN

Are you asleep now, Fielitz?

FIELITZ

[*Frightened from the contemplation of his clock.*] Not me, your honour!

WEHRHAHN

I thought you were because your head drooped so.

FIELITZ

[*With childish bashfulness.*] I was just lookin' at the hands.

WEHRHAHN

[*To* MRS. FIELITZ.] You want to go?

MRS. FIELITZ

If it's maybe possible . . . I can't hardly stand on them two legs o' mine no more.

WEHRHAHN

I believe that. When did you get up this morning?

MRS. FIELITZ

— — —?

FIELITZ

We both got up around eight o'clock.

WEHRHAHN

Do you always get up so late?

MRS. FIELITZ

Sure not! That there man is confused to-day in his mind. We got up at five. We always get up at five!

WEHRHAHN

Well, Mrs. Fielitz, you go on home now.— I should be mighty sorry in some respects . . . However, justice goes its way. Murder will out. Criminals come to a fearful end! The eternal Judge doesn't forget. And — you [*To* RAUCHHAUPT] might as well go home. Go home and wait to see how things turn out. I'll let things go this time. Your paternal feeling robbed you of your senses.

RAUCHHAUPT

[*Steps forward.*] I should like 'umbly to report, your honour . . .

WEHRHAHN

Go on! Go on! What else do you want? Let us have no more nonsense, my good man.

RAUCHHAUPT

[*Goes close up to* MRS. FIELITZ.] God is my witness! I'll show you up!

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE FOURTH ACT

The attic room over LANGHEINRICH'S *smithy. To the left, two small, curtained windows. At one of the windows an arm-chair on which* MRS. FIELITZ *is sitting. She has aged perceptibly and grown thinner.— At the second window stands a sewing-machine with a chair beside it. A skirt at which some one has been working is thrown across the chair. A bodice lies on the machine itself. A door in the rear wall leads to a little sleeping-chamber immediately under the roof. To the left of this door a brown tile-oven; to its right, a yellow wardrobe. In the right wall there is likewise a door which opens upon the hall. Behind this door a neatly made bed and a yellow chest of drawers. Above this chest hangs a seven-day clock. The* SHOEMAKER FIELITZ *stands in his stocking feet upon the chest of drawers and winds the clock.*

In the middle of the room an extension table. A hanging lamp above it. Four yellow chairs surround the table, a fifth of the same set stands near the bed. LANGHEINRICH *and* EDE, *dressed in their working-clothes, are busy at the table.* LANGHEINRICH *holds an iron weather-vane which* EDE *is painting red.*

EDE *and* LANGHEINRICH *break out in loud laugh.*

FIELITZ

[*Who has been winding the clock while the others have been laughing.*] Somebody's been pokin' around here again.

LANGHEINRICH

You c'n bet on that. I s'ppose that's what's happened. You'd better watch out more.

[*Renewed laughter.*

FIELITZ

All I say is: let me catch some one at it! An' I won't care what happens neither!

LANGHEINRICH

That's right! That's the way! Don't you care who it is, neither. I think it was Leontine.

MRS. FIELITZ

The girl ain't been near that there clock!

LANGHEINRICH

Oh, oh!

FIELITZ

Somethin's goin' to happen some day. I don't take no jokes o' that kind.

EDE

You gotta save that to put it in the shop.

LANGHEINRICH

That's the truth! That's what I always been sayin'! That corner shop'll soon be built now, an' then maybe he won't have no clock to hang up in it. How could he go an' start a business then!

FIELITZ

Firebrands! Pack o' thieves! Laugh if you wants to! You can't never get the better o' me!

LANGHEINRICH

Not a bit, can they! An' that wouldn't do. How many contracts has you been makin'? I mean about furnishin' people with shoes. You got to have somethin' to start with!

MRS. FIELITZ

Can't you leave the man in peace!

FIELITZ

You just go in my room; there you c'n see letters an' contracts lyin' around — packages an' heaps o' them!

EDE

[*Looks into the adjoining room.*] I don't see nothin'.

LANGHEINRICH

Tear up the floorin': you'll find the docyments hidden there. People has got to have their business secrets!

FIELITZ

O' course they has! An' whippersnappers don't know much about that. Go an' learn how to read an' write before you go an' mix in my business.

MRS. FIELITZ

Come, Fielitz, let them be! Don't lose your temper. You know as Langheinrich has got to have his joke! That's the way the man is made.

LANGHEINRICH

I do feel pretty jolly to-day, an' that's a fac'! I got a piece o' work done. An' if I don't go an' fall down from the steeple when I puts it up — I'll go an' christen this here occasion. An' I won't use water.

MRS. FIELITZ

Are you goin' to put it up yourself?

LANGHEINRICH

You c'n take your oath on that! An' why not? Schmarowski, he designed it. But I forged it an' I'll put it up.

LEONTINE *enters.*

LEONTINE

You better let Schmarowski do that himself.

EDE

Schmarowski ain't afraid o' anything shaky.

LANGHEINRICH

No, that's as true as can be, I know. He ain't afraid o' God nor the devil. That little man . . . I tell you, Bismarck is just a coward alongside o' him!

FIELITZ

I'd like to make a inquiry: who is it that built that there new house?

LANGHEINRICH

Well, who did?

FIELITZ

Me! An' not Schmarowski.

EDE

Well, that's certain! We all knows that, Mr. Fielitz.

FIELITZ

Right up from the foundation! Me an' nobody but me! That there is my land, my bricks, my money! All the insurance money's been sunk into that. Ax mother here if that ain't the fac'!

[*Laughter.*

MRS. FIELITZ

Oh, Lord, Fielitz! Can't you let that be? Has you got to tell them old stories all over again?

FIELITZ

That I has! I got to prove that, mother! I got to lét them people know who I is! Watch out, I tell you, when I makes my speech to-day!

Mrs. Fielitz

Schmarowski says there ain't goin' to be no speech makin'.

Fielitz

You can't go an' tie up my tongue, an' Schmarowski can't do it neither!

[*He withdraws into the adjoining little room.*

Langheinrich

You better look out, ole lady, an' see that there ain't no bloody row raised. There's talk now o' some people wantin' to get ugly. Better be a bit careful!

Mrs. Fielitz

All you gotta do is to keep your eye on him a bit. Treat him to drinks from the beginnin'. I can't keep that man in order to-day. He's bound to go to the festival.

Langheinrich

Schmarowski got a drubbin' yesterday.

Ede

Last night, yes, after the people's meetin'.

Mrs. Fielitz

Maybe he went an' gave it to 'em a bit too hot.

LANGHEINRICH

That's what he did. That little scamp talked, Mrs. Fielitz! The whole meetin' just shouted! An' he didn't mind callin' a spade a spade neither.

MRS. FIELITZ

He oughtn't to be so hot, I think.

LANGHEINRICH

That he ought, just that! An' why not? Do what you can an' go ahead! That's the way! That whole crowd don't deserve no better. Not Wehrhahn an' not Friderici. An' anyhow, it was a good thing, Mrs. Fielitz. It was done just in the nick o' time! Now he's gone an' broken with them fellers, an' everybody knows it. There ain't no goin' back now. Now he belongs to us, Mrs. Fielitz, an' I never would ha' thought it of him!

MRS. FIELITZ

You got reason to be satisfied with him, I'm thinkin'. Look at the noise in your workshop with four journeymen . . .

LANGHEINRICH

That's true, too, an' I'm not denyin' it. He put money in circulation. I couldn't make friends with Pastor Friderici's collection plate. Couldn't do it. Now everything's arranged.— Now I want you to keep your eyes open at the window when I gets up to the top o' the steeple. I'll wave an' sing out an'— jump down!

LANGHEINRICH *and* EDE *exeunt with the weather vane. A brief silence.*

MRS. FIELITZ

I wonder if Rauchhaupt will be comin' in to-day?

LEONTINE

I don't see, mother, why you're so frightened all the time. Rauchhaupt ain't nothin' but an old fool. Let him come all he pleases an' jabber away! Let him, mother. Nobody don't pay no attention to his nonsense!

MRS. FIELITZ

They says as he's been talkin' around a lot.

LEONTINE

Well, let him! I got letters too. Here's one of 'em again, mother. [*She throws down a letter in its envelope.*] But I don't worry about that. An' anyhow it's only that assistant at the railroad.

MRS. FIELITZ

It might ha' been Constable Schulze, too.

LEONTINE

Or that assistant teacher Lehnert — if you want to go on guessin'!

MRS. FIELITZ

Well, let 'em! Them fellers is jealous — an' envious o' Schmarowski an' his new house!

They'd like to go an' lay somethin' at our door. But no! 'Tain't so simple as that!

LEONTINE

[*Who has been sewing at her machine for a moment.*] Look, mama, I found this here!

MRS. FIELITZ

Hurry now, hurry! Don't go an' lose time now. That dress has got to be ready by two. Adelaide has been sendin' over again! — The one thing you ought to do is to go down to the cellar an' get that couple o' bottles o' wine, so's we can drink their health when they come up! You c'n see, they'll soon be through.

LEONTINE

That thing was the Missis' spine supporter.

MRS. FIELITZ

She was a poor, wretched crittur: strappin' herself an' tyin' herself an' squeezin' herself, an' yet she couldn't get rid o' her hump.

LEONTINE

Well, why did she have to be so vain!

MRS. FIELITZ

Don't grudge her her rest. She's deserved it.

LEONTINE

They says that her ghost keeps rappin' up in the top attic where Langheinrich sleeps.

Mrs. Fielitz

Let her be! Let her be! Don't talk no more. Maybe he was a bit rough with her for all she brought money to him. She had to sew an' sew an' earn money . . . No wonder she can't find no rest.

Leontine

Why did she have to go an' marry Langheinrich?

Mrs. Fielitz

Let them old stories be! I don't like to hear about 'em. My head's full enough o' trouble without 'em. I don't know what's wrong with me anyhow. A body sees ghosts enough now an' then without thinkin' o' the past.

Leontine

I must say, though, that if he's unfaithful to me that way . . .

Mrs. Fielitz

Langheinrich? Let him go an' be. When it comes to that, there ain't no man that's any good. If there was to be a single one whom you could go an' depend on when it comes to that — it'd be somethin' new to me.— Main thing is to be at your post. The man ain't bad. He means reel well. Be savin'. You know how careful he is! An' take care o' his bit o' clothes an' be good to his little girl. He don't object to your boy. [Fielitz *reenters clad in his long, black Sunday coat.*] You can't go to that dinner lookin' like that. Come here an' I'll sew on that there button.

FIELITZ

'Tain't possible you'll do that much! Don't go an' hurt yourself now.

MRS. FIELITZ

[*Holds his garment with her left hand and sews, still seated.*] It ain't nobody's fault if a body can't get around so quick no more. You gets well enough taken care of.

FIELITZ

Aw, them times is past! You needn't lie atop of it all! I'm like a old bootjack — kicked in a corner.— Has anybody been shovin' my clock?

LEONTINE

It's likely. He's got a screw loose. [*Exit.*

FIELITZ

You just wait!

MRS. FIELITZ

Langheinrich was just jokin'?

FIELITZ

I'll show the whole crowd o' you somethin' now that I got on top. I c'n go an' stand up to any man yet!

MRS. FIELITZ

Well, o' course. There ain't nobody doubts that.

FIELITZ

I just want you to wait two years an' see who it'll be that has made the most money: Schmarowski, Langheinrich or me!

MRS. FIELITZ

I don't see what grudge you got against Langheinrich? He went an' took us into his house . . .

FIELITZ

He did that 'cause he's got his reason an' 'cause he wants a high rent.

MRS. FIELITZ

You better be glad he is the way he is.

FIELITZ

On account o' that bit o' business with the fuse? You go right ahead an' let him trample on you.

MRS. FIELITZ

What was that there about a fuse?

FIELITZ

That business? What d'you s'ppose? Dr. Boxer talked about it too.

MRS. FIELITZ

I don't know nothin' about them affairs o' yours.

FIELITZ

Mother, I got a good conscience.

Mrs. Fielitz

You c'n go an' put it in a glass case.

Fielitz

Mother, I ain't sayin' nothin' else right now . . .

Mrs. Fielitz

That's all foolishness!

Fielitz

All right.

Mrs. Fielitz

Schmarowski was here. How's that now with the mortgage?

Fielitz

You mean that my mortgage is now the fourth?

Mrs. Fielitz

Anybody knows that a buildin' like that costs money.

Fielitz

Schmarowski is sinkin' all his money in bricks an' mortar.

Mrs. Fielitz

Nonsense!

Fielitz

It's a fac'! That thing has taken hold o' him like a sickness.

Mrs. Fielitz

Main thing is that you agrees. Don't you?

Fielitz

Not a bit! I don't agree to nothin'. I been a agent in my time an' took care o' the most complexcated affairs. Yes, an' Wehrhahn patted me on the back an' was mighty jolly 'cause I'd been so sly . . . No, mother, I ain't so green.—I c'n keep accounts! I knows how to use my pen! I'm more'n half a lawyer! That feller ain't goin' to get the better o' me.

Schmarowski *enters very bustling. He has changed the style of his garments considerably — light Spring overcoat, elegant little hat and cane. He carries a roll of building plans.*

Schmarowski

Mornin', Mrs. Fielitz. How are you now? Did you get over that slight cold?

Mrs. Fielitz

Thank you kindly; I gets along. Take a seat.

Schmarowski

Yes, I will. I've reely deserved it. I've been on my feet since four o'clock this morning! Lord only knows how I succeed in staggerin' along.

Fielitz

Mornin'. I'm here too, you know.

SCHMAROWSKI

Good mornin'. Didn't notice you at all. I have my head so full these days . . .

FIELITZ

Me too.

SCHMAROWSKI

Certainly. Don't doubt it! Have you anything to say to me? If so, go ahead, please!

FIELITZ

Not this here moment! I got other things to attend to just now. I gotta go an' meet a gentleman at the station on account o' them Russian rubber shoes. Later. Sure. But not just now.

[*He stalks out excitedly.*

SCHMAROWSKI

That cobbler makes us all look ridiculous. He plays off in all the public houses. The other day this thing happened out there in the waiting-room where all the best people were sittin': he just made his way to 'em an' talked all kinds of rot about the factories he was goin' to build and such like.

MRS. FIELITZ

The man acts as if he didn't have his right mind no more.

SCHMAROWSKI

But you're gettin' along all right.

Mrs. Fielitz

Tolerable. Oh, yes. Only I can't hardly stand the hammerin' no more. I wish we was out o' this here house!

Schmarowski

Patience! For Heaven's sake, have patience now! Things have gone pretty smoothly so far. Don't let's begin to hurry now. Just a little patience. I'm as anxious as any one for us to get settled. But I can't do no wonders. I'm glad the roof is on. I know what that cost me —an' then all these annoyances atop o' that. [*He shows her a number of opened letters.*] Anonymous, all of 'em, of course. The meanest accusations of Fielitz, of you, an', of course, of myself.

Mrs. Fielitz

I don't know what them people wants. When you got trouble you needn't go huntin' for insult. That's the way things is, an' different they won't be. They questioned us up an' down. Three times I had to go an' run to court. If there'd been anythin' to find out, they'd ha' found it out long ago.

Schmarowski

I don't want to offer no opinion about that. That's your affair; that don't concern me. 'S far as I'm concerned, I gave the people to understand what I am. When people want to get rid o' me, they got to take the consequences. That's what Pastor Friderici had better remember. I saw through his game.— But to come to the point, as

I'm in a hurry, as you see. Everything's goin' very well — but cash is needed — cash!

Mrs. Fielitz

But Fielitz ain't willin'.

Schmarowski

Mr. Fielitz will have to be!

Mrs. Fielitz

He's still thinkin' about that corner shop o' his. Can't you keep a bit o' space for it?

Schmarowski

Can't be done! How'd I end if I begin that way? You got sense enough to see that yourself. No. There wasn't no such agreement. We can't be thinkin' o' things like that.— A banker is comin' to this dinner, Mrs. Fielitz, an' I ought to know what to expect exactly. Everything is bein' straightened out now. If I'm left to stick in the mud now . . .!

Mrs. Fielitz

I'll see to it. Don't bother.

Schmarowski

Very well. An' now there's something else. Have you heard anything from Rauchhaupt again?

Mrs. Fielitz

Yes, I hears that he don't want to hold his tongue an' that he goes about holdin' us up to

contempt. That's the same thing like with Wehrhahn. I never did nothin' but kindnesses to Rauchhaupt. An' now he comes here day in an' day out an' makes a body sick an' sore with his old stories that never was nowhere but in his head. Maybe . . . my goodness . . . a man like that . . . he c'n go an' keep on an' on, till, in the end . . . well, well . . .

SCHMAROWSKI

Don't be afraid, Mrs. Fielitz. Things don't go no further now that the noise is quieted down.— By the way, I see that the carpenters are assemblin'. I got to go over there an' rattle off my bit o' speech. It's just this: if Rauchhaupt should come in again, you just question him carefully a little. There's a new affair bein' started. Got a political side to it. Immense piece o' business. 'Course I got my finger in that pie, as I has in all the others now. We'd like to get Rauchhaupt's land . . . He bought it for a song in the old days. If we c'n get it — the whole of it an' not parcelled — there'd be a cool million in it.

MRS. FIELITZ

An' here I got two savin's bank books.

SCHMAROWSKI

Thank you. Just what I need. There are times when a man can't be sparin' o' money . . .

MRS. FIELITZ

The girl is comin'. Hurry an' slip 'em into your pocket.

Schmarowski *hastily puts the bankbooks into his pocket, nods to* Mrs. Fielitz *and withdraws rapidly.*

Mrs. Fielitz

[*Half rising from her chair and looking anxiously out through the window.*] If only they don't go' an' make trouble this day. There's a great crowd o' people standin' around.

Leontine *returns with the three bottles of wine and the glasses.*

Leontine

Mama! Mama! He's downstairs again. That fool of a Rauchhaupt is down there.

Mrs. Fielitz

[*Frightened.*] Who?

Leontine

Rauchhaupt. He's comin' in right behind me.

[*She places the bottles and glasses on the table.*

Mrs. Fielitz

[*With sudden determination.*] Let him! He c'n come up for all I cares. I'll tell him the reel truth for onct.

[Rauchhaupt *puts his head in at the door.*

Rauchhaupt

Is I disturbin' you, Mrs. Fielitz?

Mrs. Fielitz

No, you ain't disturbin' me.

Rauchhaupt

Is I disturbin' anybody else then?

Mrs. Fielitz

I don't know about that. It depends.

Rauchhaupt

[*Enters. His appearance is not quite so neglected as formerly.*] My congratulations. I'm comin' in to see if things is goin' right again.

Mrs. Fielitz

[*With forced joviality.*] You got a fine instinct for them things, Rauchhaupt.

Rauchhaupt

[*Staring at her, emphatically.*] That I has, certainly! That I has! — I just met Dr. Boxer, too. He's goin' to come up and see you in a minute, too. An' I axed him about a certain matter, too.

Mrs. Fielitz

What kind o' thing was that?

Rauchhaupt

About that time, you know! They says that he said somethin' to Langheinrich that time an' Langheinrich said somethin' to him, too.

MRS. FIELITZ

I ain't concerned with them affairs o' yours. Leontine! Go an' get a piece o' sausage so that they c'n have a bite o' food when they comes over afterwards.

RAUCHHAUPT

The world don't stop movin'.

MRS. FIELITZ

No, it don't. That's so.

LEONTINE

Wouldn't you like for me to stay here now?

RAUCHHAUPT

You better be goin' an' buy some silk stockin's.

MRS. FIELITZ

What's the meanin' o' that?

RAUCHHAUPT

That don't mean nothin' much. You might think she was a countess — standin' there at Mrs. Boxer's: — Adelaide I mean, what's now Mrs. Schmarowski. There she stood in the shop an' chaffered about a yellow petticoat. She's a great lady nowadays an' one as wears red silk stockin's.

LEONTINE

People like us don't hardly have enough to buy cotton ones. [*Exit.*

Mrs. Fielitz

I wonder what people will say about Adelaide in the end?

Rauchhaupt

That ain't just talkin'. Them's facts. T'other day the beer waggon unloaded some beer at Mrs. Kehrwieder's — Mrs. Kehrwieder that's a washerwoman hereabouts. Well, my lady comes rustlin' up — that's what she does — an' turns up her nose — she ain't no beastly snob, oh, no! — an' then she asks Mrs. Kehrwieder: is it reely true that the poor drinks beer?

Mrs. Fielitz

You needn't come to me with your rot an' your gossip.

Rauchhaupt

Anyhow, what I was goin' to tell you is this: I'm on a new scent!

Mrs. Fielitz

What kind of a scent is that you're on?

Rauchhaupt

Mum's the word! I gotta be careful. I can't say nothin'; I don't pretend to know nothin'. But I kept my eyes open pretty wide, I tell you. There's detectives workin', too. I been to Wehrhahn, too, an' he told me to go right on!

MRS. FIELITZ

[*Knitting.*] O Lordy! Wehrhahn. He's goin' to do you a lot o' good, ain't he? It'll cost some more o' your money — that's what!

RAUCHHAUPT

Mrs. Fielitz, the things we has found out, I'll show 'em up clear as day, I tell you. You c'n get hold o' the smallest secret. The public prosecutor hisself pricked up his ears. An' the way you does it is this: first you draws big circles, Mrs. Fielitz, an' then you draws littler ones an' littler ones an' then — then somebody is caught! Who? Why, them criminals what set fire to the house. O' course I don't mean you, Mrs. Fielitz.

MRS. FIELITZ

I'd give the matter a rest if I was you. Nothin' ain't goin' to come out.

RAUCHHAUPT

How much you bet, Missis? I'll take you up.

MRS. FIELITZ

If nothin' didn't come out at first . . .

RAUCHHAUPT

How much you bet, Missis? Come now, an' bet. All a body's gotta be is patient. You ordered Gustav to come over at eleven o'clock with the seeds. An' just then Mrs. Schulze passed by your door. No, I don't take my nose off the scent.

Mrs. Fielitz

Now I'll tell you somethin', Rauchhaupt. I don't care nothin' about your nose. But I tell you, if you don't stop but go on sniffin' around here all the blessed time . . . I tell you, some day my patience'll be at an end!

Rauchhaupt

Why don't you go an' sue me, Mrs. Fielitz?

Mrs. Fielitz

For my part you c'n say right out what you has to say. Then a person'll know what to answer you. But don't go plannin' your stinkin' plans with that Schulze woman! I put that there woman outta here! She comes here an' tries to talk me into lettin' Leontine come over to her. The constable, he'd like that pretty well. My girl ain't that kind, though. An' now, o' course, the old witch'd like to give us a dig. Before that she wanted to do the same to you! — I don't know anyhow what you're makin' so much noise about! I don't see as anythin' bad has happened to that boy o' yours! He's taken care of. He's got a good home! He gets nursin' an' good food!

Rauchhaupt

No, no, that don't do me no good inside. I don't let that there rest on me — not on me an' not on Gustav. Can't be done! That keeps bitin' into me. I can't let that go. It cost me ten years o' my life. I knows that! I knows what I went through that time when I tried to

hang myself. I ain't never goin' to get over that, 's long 's I live! I'll find out who was at the bottom of it all! I made up my mind to that!

MRS. FIELITZ

Good Lord, an' why not? Go ahead an' do it! Keep peggin' away at it. What business is it o' mine? Has I got to have myself excited this way all the time when the doctor told me how bad it is for me . . .

RAUCHHAUPT

Missis, there ain't a soul as knows what that was. I knows it. I just ran home, blind . . . couldn't see nothin'! I didn't know nothin' no more o' God or the world. I just kept pantin' for air! An' then there I lay — like a dead person on the bed. They rubbed me with towels an' they brushed me with brushes, an' sprayed camphor all over me an' such stuff! Then I came back to life.

MRS. FIELITZ

How many hundreds o' times has you been tellin' me that? I knows, Rauchhaupt, that you went off o' your head. Well, what about that? Look at me! My hair didn't get no blacker from that there business; I didn't get no stronger from it neither. Who's worse off right now — you or me? That's what I'd like to know. You got your health; you're lookin' prosperous! An' me? What am I to-day? An' how does I look? Well, then, what more d'you want? — I dreamed o' my own funeral already! — What do you want more'n

that? I ain't goin' to bother nobody much longer. There ain't much good to be got by houndin' me! . . . An' that's the truth.— An' anyhow, you're a foolish kind o' a man, Rauchhaupt. You're so crazy, nobody wouldn't hardly believe it. First you was always wantin' to get rid o' the boy . . .

RAUCHHAUPT

Oh, you don't know Gustav, that you don't! What that there boy could do when I had him . . . an' the way he was kind to children an' such like! An' the way he c'n sing! An' the thoughts he's got in his head! That there time when he ran away from the asylum, he went an' he sat down in front o' the church where he was always listenin' to the bells, an' there he sat reel still, waitin'. You ought to ha' seen the boy then, Mrs. Fielitz, the way all that shows in his face. That's somethin'! Only thing is, he can't get it out the way the likes o' us c'n do it.

MRS. FIELITZ

Rauchhaupt, I had worse things 'n that. Yes. I lost a boy — an' he was the best thing I had in this world. Well, you see? You c'n go an' stare at me now! My life — it ain't been no joke neither.— Go right on starin' at me! Maybe you'll lose your taste for this kind o' thing the way you did onct before.

RAUCHHAUPT

Mrs. Fielitz, I'm a peaceable man, but that there . . . I'm peaceable, Missis. I never liked bein' a constable, but . . .

Mrs. Fielitz

Well, then! Everybody knows that! On that very account! An' now there ain't nobody as bad as you! You're actin' like a reg'lar bloodhound! Why? You've always been as good as gold, Rauchhaupt! Every child in the place knows that! An' now, what's all this about? — You c'n go an' open one o' them there bottles. Why shouldn't we go an' drink a bit o' a drop together? [Rauchhaupt *wipes his eyes and then walks across to draw the cork of one of the bottles.*] — Fightin' c'n begin again afterwards. I s'ppose life ain't no different from that.— An' we can't change it. There ain't nothin' but foolishness around. An' when you want to go an' open people's eyes — you can't do it! Foolishness — that's what rules this world.— What are we: you an' me an' all of us? We has had to go worryin' and workin' all our lives —every one of us has! Well, then! We ought to know how things reely is! If you don't join the scramble — you're lazy: if you do — you're bad.— An' everythin' we does get, we gets out o' the dirt. People like us has to turn their hands to anythin'! An' they, they tells you: be good, be good! How? What chanct has we got? But no, we don't even live in peace with each other.— I wanted to get on — that's true. An' ain't it natural? We all wants to get out o' this here mud in which we all fights an' scratches around . . . Out o' it . . . away from it . . . higher up, if you wants to call it that . . . Is it true as you're wantin' to move away from here, Rauchhaupt?

RAUCHHAUPT

Yes, Mrs. Fielitz, I been havin' that in my mind. An' why? Dr. Boxer an' me, we knows why. [*He groans sorrowfully.*] It ain't only on account o' my wantin' to be nearer to Gustav. No, no! I don't feel well in this here neighbourhood no more. Everybody looks at me kind o' queer nowadays.

[*The bottle has now been uncorked and* RAUCHHAUPT *fills two glasses.*

MRS. FIELITZ

That's another thing. Why does we care what people think?

RAUCHHAUPT

No, no! When a man has done what I has — that's different. When a man's gone that length — an' a former officer at that — that he's gone an' taken a rope an' tried . . . I don't understand, Missis, I don't understand how I could ha' done that.— But they cut me down . . . that they did. [*He drinks.*

MRS. FIELITZ

Is it reely true what people says about it?

RAUCHHAUPT

You see, it got out, an' people knows! An' that — me bein' a former officer — when I think o' that! No, no rain an' no wind can't wash that blot off o' me. [*He drinks.*

Mrs. Fielitz

I say: let's drink to our health. I don't care about people nor what they thinks.— But if, maybe, you do want to sell some day — who knows? . . . I c'n talk to Schmarowski. You two might agree.

Dr. Boxer, Ede *and* Leontine *enter.*

Dr. Boxer

You're having a very jolly time here, Mrs. Fielitz.

Mrs. Fielitz

Just to-day. It's an exception; that it is!

Ede

Young lady! Hey, there! You want to see somethin'? Langheinrich is dancin' around on the church-steeple!

Mrs. Fielitz *rises with difficulty and looks out.*

Leontine

I can't bear to look at things like that even.

Ede

Let him fall! He won't fall nowhere but on his feet; he's just like a cat.

Dr. Boxer

[*Softly and half-humorously threatening* Rauchhaupt.] Stop exciting my patient all the time. A

deuce of a lot of good all my doctoring will do then!

Mrs. Fielitz

You c'n leave the man be, Doctor. People has put him up to things. Otherwise he's the best feller in the world.

Dr. Boxer

Very well, then! And beyond that, Mrs. Fielitz, how do you feel?

Mrs. Fielitz

Well enough. 'Tis true,— [*she points to her breast*] — somethin's cracked inside o' here. But then! Everybody's gotta get out o' the world sometime. I've lived quite a while!

Dr. Boxer

You musn't talk so much! You must keep still longer. [*To* Rauchhaupt.] I've got an invitation for you. Mr. Schmarowski saw you going in here, and so he stopped me and asked me to say that he'd like to have you come over to the dinner!

Mrs. Fielitz

Rauchhaupt — well, o' course. Why not?

Rauchhaupt

An' I won't go givin' nothin' away yet.

Mrs. Fielitz

And you, Doctor?

Dr. Boxer

[*Quickly.*] Heaven forbid! Not I?

Mrs. Fielitz

An' why not? Do you bear him a grudge about anythin'?

Dr. Boxer

I? Bear a grudge? I never do that. But, do you see, I'm a lost man as far as all this is concerned. I don't deny that it amuses me to watch all these doings here, but I can't join in them. I'll never learn to do that.— I will probably go away again, too.

Mrs. Fielitz

An' give up such a good practice?

Dr. Boxer

Sea-faring — that gives a man true health. That is the best practice for one, Mrs. Fielitz, who is in some respects so little practical.

Mrs. Fielitz

You ain't very practical, that's true.

Dr. Boxer

No, I am not.— Listen, listen, how they're letting themselves go! [*Many voices are heard in enthusiastic shouting.*] Great enthusiasm again! In a moment they will raise Schmarowski and carry him on their shoulders. They were about to do it a moment ago. [*A great, confused noise*

of huzzaing voices floats into the room.] Well, do you see? Isn't that truly uplifting?

LEONTINE

Mother, look, look who the workin'men is raisin' up! The workin'men is raisin' him up!

MRS. FIELITZ

Who? [*She rises convulsively and stares out.*

LEONTINE

Don't you see who it is?

RAUCHHAUPT

Schmarowski.

EDE

That's how it is. I couldn't bear to see that there feller. But now . . . well . . . he's got some sense an' he's fightin' for sensible ideas — against arbitrary an' police power — now, well, I'll drink to his health, too.

DR. BOXER

Well, of course, Ede, naturally you will!

FIELITZ *enters highly excited.*

FIELITZ

Me . . . me . . . me . . . me . . . it was me that did it! Go on an' shout, an' shout! It's that there feller that they lifts up! Let 'em. But I don't make no speeches like that! Character,

conscience — them's the main things. Yes, it was me as paid an' me as built. But even if Wehrhahn went an' dropped me — I don't let go my sound opinions! There's gotta be order! There's gotta be morality! I'm for the monarchy right down to my marrow! I don't envy him that there triumph!

Dr. Boxer

Look here, Fielitz! Come over here to the light, will you? I'd like to examine your eyes.— Don't your pupils move at all?

Mrs. Fielitz

[*Pants swiftly and convulsively, throws her hands high up as if in joy, and cries out half in rapture, half in terror:*] Julius!

Leontine

Mama! Mama!

Ede

She's gone to sleep.

Leontine

[*Appealing to the* Doctor.] Mother is swingin' her arms around so!

Dr. Boxer

Who? Where? Mrs. Fielitz?

Leontine

Look! Look!

Ede

[*Laughing.*] Is she tryin' to catch sparrows in the air?

Dr. Boxer *has turned from* Fielitz *to* Mrs. Fielitz.

Dr. Boxer

Mrs. Fielitz!

Fielitz, *unconcerned by the events in the room, walks excitedly up and down in the background.* Rauchhaupt *is tensely watching from the window what takes place without.*

Leontine

What is it? Mother won't answer at all!

Rauchhaupt

I believe they're goin' to end by comin' over here!

Dr. Boxer

What is it, Mrs. Fielitz? What are you trying to do? Why do you move your hands about in that way?

Mrs. Fielitz

[*Reaching out strangely with both hands.*] You reaches . . . you reaches . . . always this way . . .

Dr. Boxer

After what?

MRS. FIELITZ

[*As before.*] You always reaches out after . . . somethin' . . .

[*Her arms drop and she falls silent.*

LEONTINE

[*To* DR. BOXER.] Is she sleepin'?

DR. BOXER

[*Seriously.*] Yes, she has fallen asleep. But keep all those people back now.

RAUCHHAUPT

The whole crowd is comin' over here.

DR. BOXER

[*Emphatically.*] Keep them back! Ede! Turn them back at once!

EDE *runs out.*

LEONTINE

Doctor, what's happened to mother?

DR. BOXER

Your mother has . . .

LEONTINE

What, what?

DR. BOXER

[*Significantly.*] Has fallen asleep.

LEONTINE'S

[*Face assumes an expression of horror; she is about to shriek.* DR. BOXER *takes hold of her vigorously and puts his hand over her mouth. She regains a measure of self-control.*] But, Doctor, she was talkin' just now . . .?

DR. BOXER

[*Gently draws* LEONTINE *forward with his left hand and places his right upon the forehead of the dead woman.*] So she was. And from now on she takes her fill of silence.

In the background FIELITZ, *careless of what has happened, regards his eyes sharply and intently in a hand mirror.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

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